VALLEY VOICE

Volume XXXV No. 3 • 5 February, 2015

www.ourvalleyvoice.com

Assemblyman Devon Mathis Attends Democratic Opening

Staff Reports

On January 24, the Tulare County Democratic Party cut a ceremonial ribbon to officially open its new administrative headquarters in downtown Visalia's Montgomery Square. State Assemblyman Devon Mathis (R-26) was on hand to offer his congratulations, presenting a letter to Chairman Ruben Macareno.

"He did say he would reach across the aisle during his campaign, " Macareno said. "And this is one symbolic action of staying true to his word. I'd like to think that it was Tulare County Democrats that put him over the establishment candidate."

Last November, Mathis was elected to the State Assembly over then-favorite

MATHIS continued on **9 »**

Democratic Central Committee officers Norma Burns, Grace Calderon and Ruben Macareno read congratulatory letter presented by State Assemblyman Devon Mathis with Lali Moheno and County Democratic Vice Chairman Jack Gonzalez.

The World Ag Expo continues to draw 100,000 visitors per year. Photo courtesy World Ag Expo

Ag Show Means Big Business for Tulare County

Nancy Vigran

What started as a display show for local farmers in a quiet little agricultural community in 1968 has grown for nearly 50 years to become the largest agricultural show in the world. And, with its 1,500 exhibitors and 100,000 visitors, it has come to mean so much not only to the agricultural community, but to the county as a whole.

"It certainly is one of the largest economic impacts that we have," said Tulare County Supervisor Pete Vander Poel III. Vander Poel's region is District II, which includes Tulare and the International Agri-Center, where the World Ag Expo is held.

"It's very positive for hotels, restaurants, retailers and tourism up and down the Valley," he said, continuing, "Agriculture is the engine of this county and the Central Valley, and most any job here is related to it in some way."

Newly appointed Tulare Chamber Executive Director Ben Brubaker is looking for even a stronger connection between the City of Tulare and the show.

"How can we establish that relationship so that all businesses benefit, is important," he said.

Guest services at the show will be handing out short surveys to help with some input, including such

EXPO continued on **13 »**

Two Cases Still Pending Against Tulare County Animal Control

Catherine Doe

In the suit against Tulare County Animal Control (TCAC), the county has decided to demand a jury trial. Paul Grenseman and Julia Jimenez filed suit in Tulare County Superior Court against five Tulare County employees on November 10, 2014. The plaintiffs are suing the county for discrimination, racial/ethnic and sexual harassment, failure to prevent discrimination and failure to prevent harassment as well retaliation for objecting to, speaking out against, and complaining of illegal discrimination and harassment.

Clyde. Photo courtesy Wendy Jones.

On December 4, 2013, Grenseman and Jimenez were "walked off the job" at TCAC and told that they were under investigation and being put on administrative leave. Jimenez was subsequently fired on July 2, and Grenseman retired June 5 — two

TCAC continued on **7 »**

Local Credit Union Hit By Fraudsters

Dave Adalian

By the time she got a letter on January 21 warning her of possible fraud at her credit union, Carol Blackwell's account had already been robbed of $1,900.

"I thought it might be my fault," Blackwell said. However, she wasn't the only victim. At least two other Educational Employees Credit Union (EECU) customers have reported fraudulent charges against their EECU accounts, and the breach was apparently wide enough to prompt the Fresno-based institution to issue the warning letter. EECU's Facebook page was also updated with information about how to protect bank accounts from electronic attacks on January 23.

While Blackwell said the fraudulent charges against her account occurred "overseas," others have said EECU security personnel told them the unusual activity originated in Cambodia. In Blackwell's case, the fraudulent charges occurred on January 20, the day before she received EECU's warning letter. In the other cases, the fraudulent activity happened the weekend prior.

Blackwell discovered her checking account had been emptied when

FRAUD continued on **13 »**

Visalia Police Department Starts Research on Body Cameras

Catherine Doe

The Visalia Police Department (VPD) made a presentation to the Visalia City Council on January 20 about its plan to outfit officers with body cameras. The VPD will be starting the process with an internal research committee to look into the many complicated issues surrounding body cams. The research committee will investigate sources of funding for the cameras, and issues of privacy, public records, cost of storage, protocols and procedures.

Coincidently, the VPD's presentation happened the same day that the City of Fresno equipped part of their police force with body cameras. On that Tuesday, 50 Fresno police officers were fitted with the device, with another 50 officers to be fitted the following week. Fresno's goal is the same as Visalia's: to outfit all of its officers with their own camera. That will be 400 for Fresno, and 102 for the VPD.

According to the *Fresno Bee*, Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer said, "It really boils down to this – trust." Though Dyer was referring to the police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Tamir Rice in Cleveland, and the choking of Eric Garner in New York City, Fresno has had its share of officer-involved shootings or beatings, and as a result has lost some community trust. Fresno, in fact, is further along in the process than Visalia because an independent police auditor recommended that the Fresno Police Force wear the body cameras.

Visalia City Councilmember Warren Gubler said during the January 20

VPD continued on **6 »**

Tulare County Moves Forward With HSR

Catherine Doe

While Fresno County was celebrating the official ground breaking of the California High-Speed Rail on January 6, Tulare County was debating whether to sign a cooperative agreement with that same entity. During the Tulare County Board of Supervisor's meeting, Resource Management Agency staff had originally recommended that the TCBOS sign the agreement. But as the discussion progressed it was clear that the RMA staff needed time to review the HSR overpasses that crossed Highway 43. It was also clear that the property owners affected by the rail needed some face-time with the HSR staff to clearly voice their concerns.

According to the wording on the

HSR continued on **13 »**

Nothing is more important than your family's health. Our comprehensive care helps every member of your family through every stage of life.

Call us today to schedule an appointment or visit us online.

FAMILY HEALTHCARE NETWORK
a california health+ center
Your Health. Our Mission.
877.960.3426 | fhcn.org

Accredited By The Joint Commission

A license to care

Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency

Tulare County Foster Care Licensing offers
• Ongoing training • Support and mentors • Networking
Call today to schedule an orientation at your convenience.

TULARE COUNTY Foster Care LICENSING
Where big hearts meet little hands

tchhsa.org 623-0581

FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

A Moveable Triste

This is very likely the last--or at least second to last--column I'll write from this house. Our forced move is finally at hand. After nearly 16 years here, almost two of which bent to the oars of this paper, it is time to take a pen in hand and write something of a goodbye.

She's putting a brave face on it but, as I have said before, this is the only house our youngest has ever known. And while our older kids--because they're not smack in the middle of high school--have more mature distractions to occupy them, still, they are all deeply saddened and unsettled by the loss of what had long been considered the family home. We don't consider it that anymore.

Unsettled is a good word. One tends, after all--if eventually--to settle somewhere. In fact, the very notion of settling--except for, say, second best--is heavy with connotations both of permanence and home. It is difficult, sometimes, to appreciate just how settled one's home has become--especially in a bustling household--until one is metaphorically frogmarched out the front door.

But the situation isn't so dire as it was when we had no house to move in to. We have at last attended to what proved to be ridiculously difficult for a family of our size--we found a suitable house. Or should I have said a sizeable house?

So, while we're all sad to see the back of a house we all loved, I suspect that sadness, in time, will evaporate. And while things will be different, it doesn't follow that they will be worse.

Here, for instance, we were responsible for all of the maintenance and landscaping, the appliances and plumbing, pest control, roofing and painting--in short, the whole shooting match. We've sunk more than one hundred grand into this place in the course of about ten years; not much fun, but not, either, very onerous. Not like trying to get a teen-aged boy to mow the lawn.

But not there: At our new house I might never so much as uproot a weed. Certainly no teenager will.

Here, there is a piano in the room where I write and edit; believe it or not, nobody seems overly bothered by my presence when they play it. Now, I appreciate music--I even go so far as to play myself, if egregiously, the guitar, bass and clarinet--but let me say this: I think most people would find the idea of a house bursting with music and the young (and the original music of the young, and the music of Neil Young) to be an attractive thing. It is; and while we're fortunate to have such gifted kids, we're also under siege. This two-storey house is a century old, uninsulated, and can approximate the acoustic properties of an upright bass. Every room here has hosted a concert, literally, and there is no escaping the sonic onslaught in the rest of the house.

But not there: The new place, being newer, likely is insulated. It is more spread out than here, being a ranch style house, and the property comes with a stand-alone separate living/work area that includes a second, independent garage. Translation: The property comes with a music room.

It comes, too, with a jacuzzi. I plan to work from there. By work I mean drink chardonnay and read carefully folded back copies of the San Francisco Chronicle. Out here in Lemon Cove we are just a few miles outside the delivery envelop of that paper and, as I grew up in the Bay Area, I miss it. Even money says that now we'll be able to get a subscription. Anyhow, reading a decent paper is something every decent editor should endeavor to do--and I certainly don't want to get in any hot water with the Visalia Times-Delta.

If it isn't already--and only the owners would know--this house should be placed on an historic registry. It's something of a landmark, and it's likely most local readers know it. Everyone here knows this place when I describe it and, though somewhat boxy, it really is quite beautiful. Thousands of people pass by here every day, some stopping to take photographs.

Not there: The new house is not much taller than the orange trees which surround and obscure it. We're talking about a hideaway. Imagine coming into a jungle clearing all of a sudden--and there, unexpectedly, stands this sprawling house. Got the picture? Now take away the clearing. The new house is a place you have to try to find, much in the same way Hiram Bingham set out to find Machu Picchu way back in 1911. But maybe the Yucatan makes for a better analogy here, as the new house sits on no mountaintop--and no mountaintop is visible from the house. If you were burrowing your way through the virgin Yucatan in search of undiscovered archeological sites, your machete would just about clang off the stone work of, say, some Mayan temple before you even knew it was there.

Maybe I belabored the point: The new house is practically invisible. But more to the point, I think we'll all come to be appreciative of that; grateful, even. It will be difficult to bother us if we can't be found.

On, now, to new adventures--and fewer responsibilities--in a house in which, while watching television, I will actually be able to hear it. No more equivalencies of the Beatles' famous 1969 rooftop concert; on, now, to garage band. On, now, to the duel liquid enjoyment of chardonnay and jacuzzi--a true miracle of the water and wine.

Off, now, to fix dinner. But I'll be back inside these pages in two weeks' time.

— Joseph Oldenbourg

THE VALLEY VOICE IS YOUR NEWSPAPER
Published by The Valley Voice, LLC.

Publisher/Editor: Joseph Oldenbourg
joseph@ourvalleyvoice.com

Staff:
Catherine Doe, writer (catherine@ourvalleyvoice.com)
Tony Maldonado, webmaster (tony@ourvalleyvoice.com)
Nancy Vigran, sales (nancy@ourvalleyvoice.com)
Stefan Barros, sports (stefan@ourvalleyvoice.com)

Contact us & share your opinion: www.ourvalleyvoice.com
208 W. Main St., Ste. E • Visalia, CA 93291

Political Fix

Catherine Doe

How Much Does It Take To Buy A Vote Around Here?

The final numbers are in on how much each candidate spent on the election. It ends up that Mr. Kashkari spent $7.1 million for the privilege of losing to Jerry Brown. Ashley Swearengin actually won many more votes than Mr. Kashkari, which is unusual for a down-ballot office. She wisely did not endorse either candidate in the governor's race.

$7.1 million might seem like a lot to spend just to lose - that is until you compare it to what Meg Whitman spent on her gubernatorial campaign in 2010. Ms. Whitman spent $178.5 million to get 0.6% more of the vote than what Mr. Kashkari captured with his money in 2014. Mr. Kashkari received 40% of the vote last November. Ms. Whitman received 40.6% of the vote in 2010.

In both elections, Governor Brown spent significantly less than his opponents.

Madam President

Ms. Swearengin, all but declared her candidacy for Governor in 2018. The *Fresno Bee* reported that at the end of her campaign for Controller she was $65,000 in debt, which has been winnowed down to $30,000. That's a manageable amount Tim Clark, Ms. Swearengin's consultant, said, "because of anticipation she'll run for office again soon." The fact that Ms. Swearengin made such a strong showing in the last election combined with, according to Mr. Clark, "a high anticipation that she'll run in 2018," means that donors will readily help the mayor retire her debt and get her ready for a new campaign.

Ms. Swearengin has already said that she likes to be in the driver's seat and doesn't want to sit in Washington trying to pass legislation. In 2018, there are only two offices up for grabs worthy of her experience: Dianne Feinstein's Senate seat, and the governorship of California. She clearly does not want to be a senator, so that would mean a run for governor against Gavin Newsom.

I predict she will win by a hair even though the voter registration numbers are against her. They were overwhelming against Rep. David Valadao, and he still won his seat. The fact that Mr. Newsom is sitting around doing nothing for eight years as Lt. Governor, while Ms. Swearengin is "getting it done in Fresno," might put her over the top. I also predict that half way through her second term as governor of California, she will run in the 2024 presidential race and become the second California Governor and second woman to inhabit the White House!

Twinspeak--Almost

Rep. Devin Nunes and Rep. Valadao are so similar it's eerie. They are both young Republican congressmen whose family lineage extends not just to Portugal, but to the Azores, little islands off the Portuguese coast. They are both farmers; Rep. Nunes owns a farm with his brother, and Rep. Valadao runs a dairy with his brothers. They both have three young children.

So it goes without saying that they are friends, support each other in Congress, and share the same political beliefs, except for one--immigration reform.

Why would two men who share the same socio-economic background and political party differ in comprehensive immigration reform? Could it be that Rep. Valadao's support of the undocumented stems from the fact that Democrats have a double-digit advantage over Republicans in his 21st Congressional District? The 21st is also 71% Hispanic. Conversely, Republicans have a double-digit advantage in Rep. Nunes' 22nd District, leaving Rep. Nunes free to vote his conscience.

In October of 2013, Rep. Valaldao became the third House Republican to support an immigration reform bill introduced by Democrats. He also supports President Obama's deferring deportation for children brought here as minors and for parents with children born in the United States. Mr. Valadao further voted, along with 10 other Republicans, against a bill that would fund Homeland Security but strip money for funding President Obama's executive orders concerning these two groups.

Politically, it's hard to believe that Rep. Valadao really believes in Democrat-sponsored immigration reform. Morally, it's hard to believe that Rep. Nunes doesn't support executive actions that keep families together. Nor does he believe in deferring deportation for those children who did not come here by choice, many of whom live right here in his district.

The fate of six million souls will be affected by President' Obama's executive orders. Tearing families apart just because one of the members was not born here is not a Republican issue or a Democratic issue, it's a human issue--and Rep. Valadao and Rep. Nunes should come to an agreement on it.

Does Chris Christie Really Want to Run For President?

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie exclaimed three years ago, "Can you see me as somebody's vice president? I mean, who would be that poor guy?" Christie told MSNBC, "You know, I just don't think that my personality is necessarily suited to being No. 2. Can you see me playing second fiddle to someone else?"

Well, yes I can. I don't think Mr. Christie is running for president in 2016, I think he is running for vice president.

Much has changed in the three years since his emphatic exclamation: Bridgegate, poll numbers, deficits and downgrading the state's credit rating eight times. From Mr. Christie's new vantage point, vice presidential might be looking pretty good right now. Four years, maybe even eight, as the VP would do a lot to help the American voter forget Christie's unsavory past. Maybe eight years' sitting at a ceremonial post will keep Mr. Christy's name relevant without tarnishing his image with pesky criminal investigations. Maybe. He is from New Jersey.

Mr. Christie made Mitt Romney's shortlist of running mates in 2012. But Mr. Christie had too many black marks against him, such as: the fact that he was obese, has suffered asthma attacks and had some unjustified expenses when he was New Jersey's Attorney General. This time around Mr. Christie will be a bonafide presidential candidate participating in the primaries and the debates. If he can make it without screwing up until Super Tuesday on March 1, and then graciously bow out, he could prove both his mettle and that he doesn't have too many skeletons in the closet to be someone's running mate.

What will Mr. Christie have to offer as a presidential running mate? Money. He is the third-biggest fundraiser after Jeb Bush and Mr. Romney, and now Mr. Romney is out of the picture. Now he needs to convince Mr. Bush to choose him as his running mate.

But do Mr. Christie and Mr. Bush get along? According to one of his monthly radio programs given early in 2014, Mr. Christie said that it would be stressful to run against Mr. Bush "because I consider Jeb a friend. And he's been a wonderful friend to me. You like to run against people that you don't like." Think Hillary Clinton.

By the time yet a third President Bush left office, a Vice President Christie would be Mr. Bush's age right now. Perfect for his "turn" and consistent with the Republican Party's practice of handing the baton over to the oldest white guy who has paid his dues. The real question is: How long are the Republicans going to keep that antiquated practice up, and will Mr. Christie be able to win the Republican Nomination for president against Ms. Swearengin?

Getting Mixed Messages

You can't blame Mr. Romney for testing the waters on a third run for president. Looking at the poll numbers he was consistently the Republicans' first choice, even though he made it pretty clear last year that he didn't want to run. Mr. Romney was always invited to the highest-profile conservative parties, conferences and summits--that is until he said, "I want to be president."

The last time a candidate for president who lost a previous general election came back to try it again was President Nixon, and that worked out well.

Does anyone remember the sense of general panic that swept through the Republican Party in 2012 when Mr. Romney started winning all the primaries? Remember Republican operators begging Mr. Christie and Mr. Bush to make a bid? It got to the point where both gentlemen had to officially announce on TV that they were definitely not interested in running for president in 2012 just to get the press off their backs.

Mr. Romney should have been a little savvier than to put so much stock into public opinion polls. But then again, maybe he was just bored.

Here is a list of what other presidential hopefuls did after losing their elections: Sen. McCain went back to being a highly ranked senator, Sen. Kerry went on to become Secretary of State and Mr. Gore succeeded in making Climate Change a household topic with the movie, "An Inconvenient Truth."

Mr. Romney? He remodeled his home in La Jolla – complete with a car elevator. Besides his home remodeling he has done nothing in the 10 years since he last held office except run for president.

I think the Republican Party faithful are sleeping a little better now that Mr. Romney has pulled out of the race.

Obama Care Doesn't Work

It's a nice idea, but Obama Care doesn't work. When Obamacare passed in 2010, it was heartening to see that Congress at least cared that some Americans couldn't see a doctor. But they passed a bill that will not work.

Our healthcare system is beyond repair and unless you are over 65, get full coverage at work (and don't get sick and lose your job, ironically) or are absolutely filthy rich, you are not going to see a doctor. And if you are self-employed, have a good income, a family to support, and a medical emergency, kiss your house goodbye.

So has anything changed since Obamacare passed?

Under Obamacare anyone making $16,000 or less gets free healthcare. That's great, but there are two big, big problems attached to this "free" healthcare. The federal government is helping to pay for this for three years. How the individual states are supposed to cover the cost afterwards has not been addressed. Second, there are no doctors available. Those who are available do not accept Covered California plans, making Obamacare theoretical.

It's not just the poor who can't see a doctor but the self-employed middle class.

It would cost my family $1000 per month for coverage with a $6000 deductible.

If we do not buy this health insurance we will be fined $975 in 2015--a fine that is projected to go up every year, but which is worth it. My family makes a lot of money, but after a huge chunk goes to taxes, the remainder is split seven ways, the result being that doctor visits are an unattainable luxury, not a necessity.

The end result is that even if our family did manage to pay the $1000 a month in coverage, we don't have the $6000--plus a 20% co-pay--to go see a doctor. And for the common American privilege of not seeing a doctor, we get fined $975.

My childless siblings and my parents have a raft of doctors--bone doctors, back doctors, skin doctors, heart doctors, foot doctors. You name it, they have a doctor for it--this, in addition to their general practitioner.

They are in that subgroup of people who think seeing a doctor is a necessity. Dr. Castiglione was my last doctor. He was my pediatrician. I was 17-years old when I last saw him.

With very few exceptions, I had it a lot better than my five kids, who almost never had their own doctor, and now Obamacare has actually made things worse for them.

The moral of the story is, if you do not have a chronic disease, then stay healthy and stay out of the doctor's office or the very expensive emergency room.

Despite urban legend, emergency rooms are anything but free and they will send your unpaid bill to a collection agency.

If you do have a chronic disease? Take the Republicans' advice: "Die quietly."

Community Workshops for East Side Regional Park Project Set for Feb. 11-12

Staff Reports

The first two of four community workshops for Visalia's East Side Regional Park and Groundwater Recharge Project will be held from 6:30 to 8pm on Wednesday, February 11, at Café 210, 210 West Center Avenue, and on Thursday, February 12, during the same hour and a half, at the Whitendale Community Center, 630 West Beech Avenue.

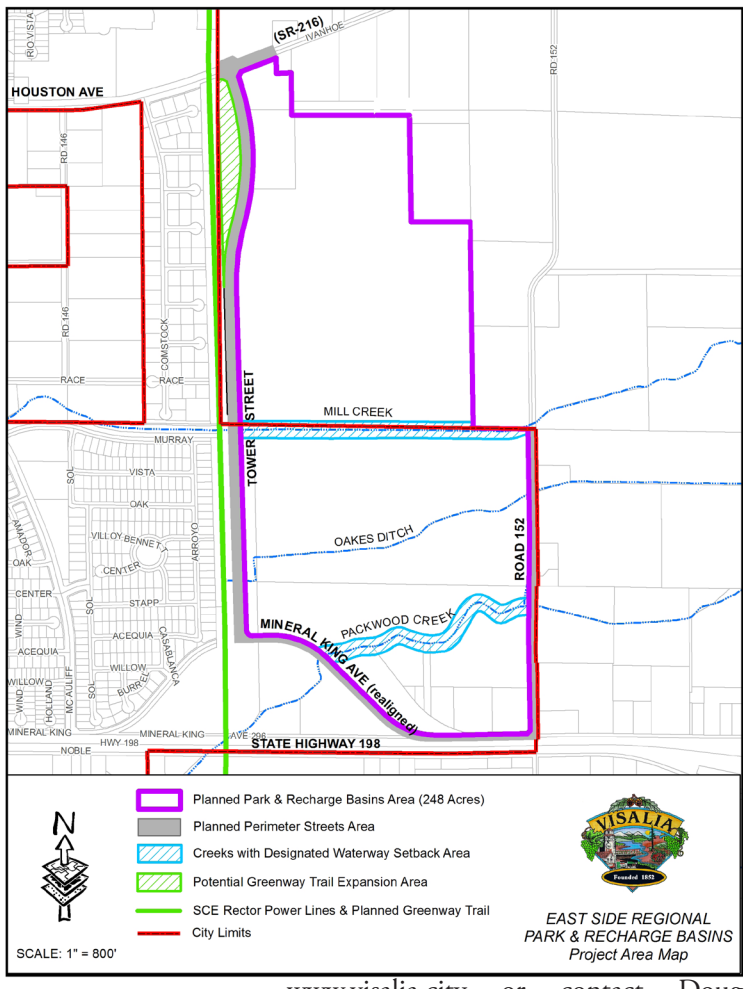
The East Side Regional Park and Groundwater Recharge Project integrates groundwater recharge basins with regional park facilities at the 248-acre complex, located north of Highway 198 between the large, dual-tower pole electrical lines and Road 152. The public is encouraged to attend each of the community workshops to fully participate in the park design process.

The first two workshops are intended to engage participants in an effort to determine the community's recreational needs, any future amenities for the park and which uses/activities will have the highest priority there. A design charrette format will be used in Workshop #3 that will allow the participants to further define the scope of the project and to "brainstorm" design concepts or alternatives for the park. Site uses and amenities will be located on the site to help determine their location within the park. Workshop #4 will present two alternatives which will be reviewed and evaluated by the participants to determine which alternative, solution or options for the park should be developed into the final park master plan.

Community Workshop #3 will be held from 6:30 to 8pm on Thursday, March 26, and Community Workshop #4 will be held from 6:30 to 8pm on Thursday, June 18. Both workshops will be held in San Joaquin Room C&D at the Visalia Convention Center, 303 E. Acequia Avenue.

The groundwater recharge basins are an integral part of Visalia's strategy to help sustain its water resources and for implementation of the recycled water exchange agreement with the Tulare Irrigation District. The site location is optimal for both groundwater recharge and stormwater layoff facilities. It is anticipated that funding for the groundwater recharge facilities, estimated at about $10 million, will be obtained first; it is further anticipated that, before work on the park is begun, the groundwater recharge facilites will have finished construction. The city plans to pursue grant funds for construction.

The development of the regional park is to be conducted in phases, timed and controlled by when funding is secured, similar to how Riverway Sports Park was built. Funding may come from many sources, including park impact fees, grants, special General Fund monies earmarked by the Council, debt financing, or other funding sources. The Parks and Recreation Commission, Environmental Committee, and Waterways and Trails Committee will be involved in the project master planning. The City Council appointed a 13-member Park Master Planning Task Force to guide the process. The planning effort includes community workshops and citizen outreach to solicit the community's vision for the future park site.



For more information on the project, go to the City's website at www.visalia.city or contact Doug Damko at ddamko@ci.visalia.ca.us.

Anheuser-Busch Delivers Water to Porterville

Anheuser-Busch is providing 2,156 cases of emergency drinking water, 51,744 cans, for use by Porterville residents affected by the ongoing drought. The Tulare County Office of Emergency Services has reported that 859 private wells have gone dry in the county. A truck loaded with water was to arrive on Friday, January 30, 2015 at 2:00pm at Iglesia Emmanuel located at 185 South Leggett Street in Porterville.

Sequoia Beverage Company, the local Anheuser-Busch distributor, is working with the American Red Cross of Visalia to get the water where it's needed.

"These residents have been persevering with limited water resources, and this is one way Anheuser-Busch can help our friends and neighbors," said Peter Kraemer, vice president of supply and head brewmaster for Anheuser-Busch. Since 1988, Anheuser-Busch has donated more than 72 million cans of emergency drinking water following natural and other disasters.

Newmark Grubb
Pearson Commercial

AVAILABLE:

Office 6,168sf
$470,100 - $75/sf
Lease $3,700

Industrial 55,920sf
$13,980 - $0.25/sf

Service Commercial
2,000sf
$800 - $0.40sf

Ask for **Mike Porte**
(559)972-2421 BRE# 01075873

FREE Cardiac Screenings

You're Invited To
BeHeartSmart

If you knew you were going to have a *heart attack* tomorrow, what would you *change today?*

Saturday, Feb. 21st
8am - 12pm

FREE Screenings available
(Need to fast for 4 hours prior to screening)

- Peripheral Artery Disease screening* (PAD)
- Glucose/Cholesterol Screening
- Balance Screening
- Blood Pressure/Vital signs
- Nutrition And Weight

Informational Booths:
Sleep Disorders
Cardiac Rehabilitation
Stroke
Nutrition
Diabetes

Please Note:
Health Screenings start at 8:00 am
Light refreshments will be provided
*Reservations are required for PAD Screening.
Call 1 (877) 529-3241

Visalia Family Medicine Center
202 W. Willow
Visalia

Kaweah Delta Family Medicine Center
A division of Kaweah Delta Health Care District

Supervisors Approve Mooney Grove 20-Year Plan

Catherine Doe

On January 27, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors voted to approve the Mooney Grove 20-year master Plan. Jason Paul, from the Fresno engineering group Kleinfelder, and Dan Veyna, owner of Sierra Designs Landscape Architecture, presented an overview of the plan.

Veyna highlighted the popular assets of the park that will be preserved. Although it is acknowledged that Mooney Grove has fallen into disrepair, all the picnic arbors are booked during the summer and for special events. In addition to repairing and preserving the arbors, Veyna highlighted the oak tree canopy, End of the Trail historic monument, boat house, lake and disc golf course as assets the community would like to see enhanced and preserved. The disc golf is a new attraction that has brought in regional golf tournaments.

New features to be added to Mooney Grove might include a water play area, food trucks and the linking of Mooney Grove with surrounding community trails and transit system. There was also interest in bringing back "Pops in the Park," a popular event in Mooney Grove put on by the Tulare County Symphony.

There are a few existing features in the park identified as not economically feasible to preserve. These are the koi/lily pond, war memorial and the concession stand. The intention is to rebuild the war memorial in a more central location, but remove the lily pond and concession stand.

Kleinfelder was hired in 2008 to facilitate obtaining a grant for the History of Farm Labor and Agricultural Museum. The company was also paid to create a conceptual 20-year plan to provide a long- range vision for Mooney Grove. Kleinfelder worked with the county staff, supervisors and community to get everyone's vision of the park before finalizing their conceptual plan. The plan, considered just a framework for future comprehensive planning, can be amended.

The supervisors seemed to be in unanimous agreement with Veyna's assessment. Supervisor Allen Ishida recounted a childhood story of his excitement about going to Mooney Grove to buy a special treat at the concession stand, only to find it closed. He said that the concession stand was not profitable enough in the 1950's to remain open and it is not profitable enough today. What is profitable are the food vendor trucks. If park patrons knew food was going to be sold at special events and on the weekends, more people would come.

Supervisor Phil Cox said, two of his relatives' names are on the war memorial, and that his family donated money to get it built but, "what was built is not what we were promised." He was still willing to donate toward the construction of a new war memorial. The new memorial would honor all war veterans and be located on the west side of the lake, inside the planned "park-within-a-park." The "park-within-a-park" concept will be a network of pedestrian walkways, picnic areas and a historic "Main Street" leading to the museums. The current war memorial only commemorates Vietnam Veterans, is in an obscure location and is in complete disrepair.

Another point of agreement was the new entryway. Though Veyna and Paul said they feel that a new entrance to the park is a long term goal, Cox voiced his opinion that the county should move the entrance to Avenue 272, sooner rather than later. He said, patrons currently have to make an illegal u-turn to enter the park and get in a line that can stretch a mile long on weekends.

The plan's recommendations are designed to increase attendance and create a greater diversity of activities at the park. But, not all community members are in agreement with the 20-year plan. Though the Agricultural Museum was primarily built with grant money, the county did have to contribute financially and also needs to staff and maintain the museum. Some community members who voiced opposition to the master plan want the basics fixed now. They want the arbors and picnic benches fixed, the lake cleaned up and the boats brought back. The money spent on outside consultants and the museums should have gone to fulfill Hugh Mooney's original wishes, which did not include museums being located in the park. He set aside Mooney Grove as a refuge for county residents to enjoy a picnic and wander around the majestic oaks.

One of those county residents not in favor of the Agriculture Museum was John Rogers. He reminded the supervisors that Mooney Grove is the oldest park in the state and was the location of the first Tulare County fair. Rogers suggested that the supervisors approve a three to five-year plan to get some basic repairs done immediately. He also pointed out the historical significance of what he referred to as the lily pond. Rogers said that it was one of the depression era work projects and worthy of restoration.

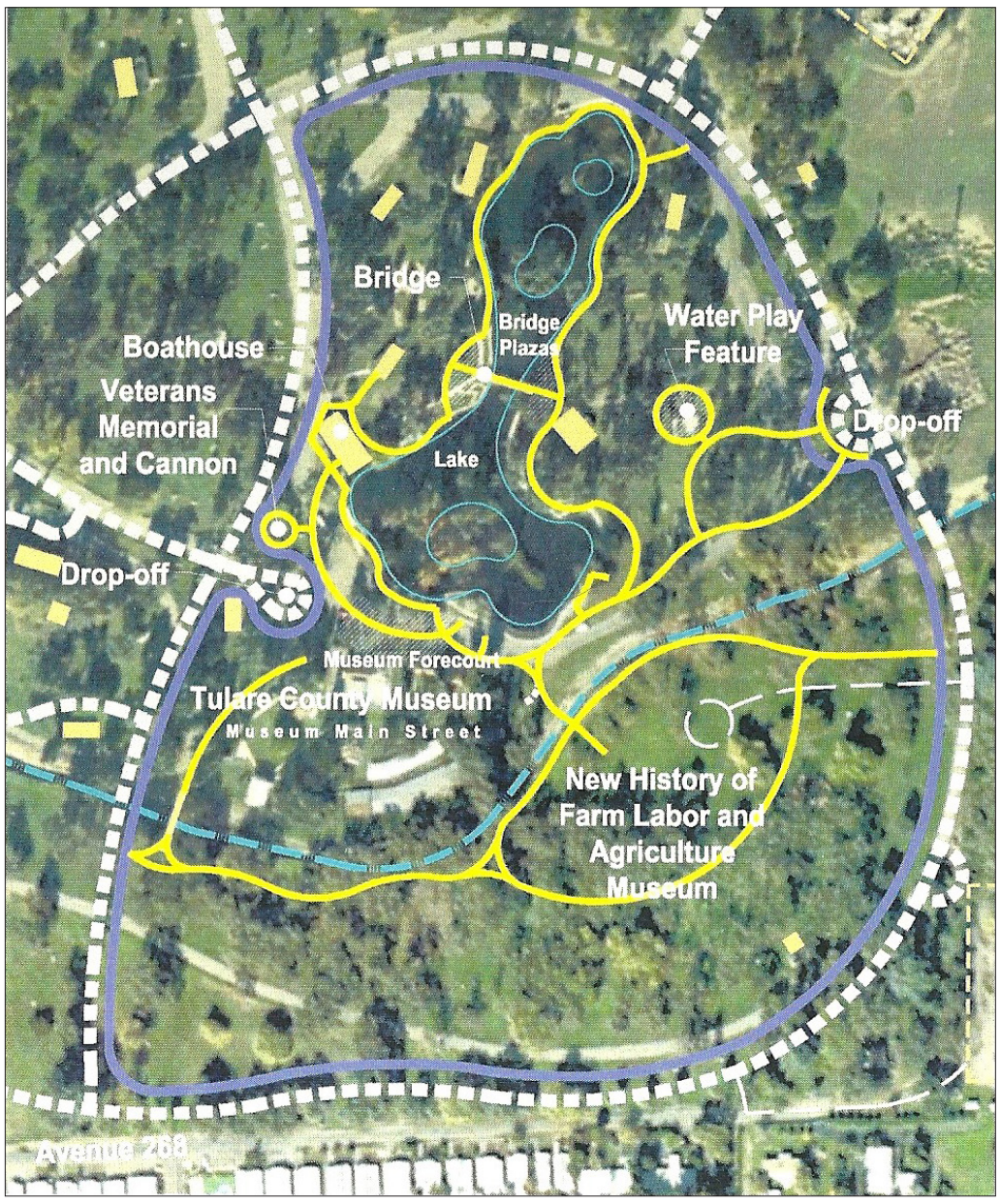
"The lake looks like a health hazard" said Rogers during public comment.

Mary Bryant pointed out during a previous meeting, "what good is a boat house with no boats?" She is chair of The Real Mooney Grove Project, whose Facebook group boasts 800 members. Her theory, she said, is that park money which should be used for maintenance has been funneled to the new museum, leaving nothing left to maintain the rest of the park. "Then," said Bryant, "the county declares a certain feature too far gone to save after having left it in disrepair."

Supervisor Ishida brought up the last point of the day: that the park will never be pristine, or even considered clean, with the hundreds of geese in residence. Park staff in the audience laughed in agreement at someone's suggestion of a hunting party to rid the park of geese, possibly in reference to Parks and Recreation Manager Neil Pilegard's solution.

Pilegard has said, he feels that all the wildlife in the park is a nuisance and a health risk to the public. According to an employee who was ultimately fired, Pilegard used to hunt the ducks and geese on weekends with a bow and arrow.

According to Senior Administrative Analyst John Hess, "This method of removing geese from the park was conducted in December 2012. Two geese were impacted. Due to the ineffective practice, park staff is working with the California Department of Fish and Game to implement a trap and release program. This would consist of park staff capturing the geese and releasing them to a pre-approved Fish and Game location."



The proposed "park-within-a-park" concept. Illustration courtesy Tulare County.

Don Warkentin Announces Retirement from WHCL

Staff Reports

On January 27 Don Warkentin has announced he will retire from West Hills College Lemoore (WHCL), where he has served as president since 2004.

Warkentin went to work at the college in 1986 after 13 years as a teacher, coach, athletic director and administrator at Lemoore High School. During his time as president at WHCL, the college grew from 1,000 students to more than 4,500 students now housed on more than 100 acres in Lemoore.

Under his leadership the college is now a fully accredited institution, one of 112 in the California Community College System.

At a recent board meeting the West Hills Community College District's Board of Trustees approved the retirement request--effective in late fall of 2015--for Warkentin, 68.

The board will take several months to do a national search for a replacement.

"You don't replace a Don Warkentin." said Chancellor Frank Gornick. "He played a significant role in the growth and development of our college in Lemoore and served our institution and the community with great distinction. He will be missed as a friend and colleague."

His retirement will end a 42-year career in education. Warkentin began in 1973 as a biology teacher for Lemoore High School. During his tenure there, he was also a football coach, baseball coach, athletic director, and principal of the continuation school.

Don Warkentin

In 1986, Warkentin moved over to West Hills College, serving as Associate Dean of what was then the WHC Kings County Center.

He was a driving force in making WHCL an independent campus in 2002, as well as building the Golden Eagle Arena and currently overseeing the construction of a state-of-the-art Student Center.

Long active in civic affairs, Warkentin was named Citizen of the Year by the Lemoore Chamber of Commerce in 2014. He is currently a member of the boards of both the Lemoore chamber, where he has been a director, and the Kings County Economic Corporation, where he has been chairman.

He also served 12 years on the Lemoore Union Elementary School Board. Warkentin is active in the Lemoore Kiwanis Club and the Odd Fellow's Club.

He expects to continue being involved in community affairs after retirement.

"I enjoyed the experience and all that West Hills College has given me and my family these last 29 years," he said. "I saw the college grow to a full-fledged campus, an experience I will never forget."

VPD

Continued from p. 1

work session that the VPD already has the respect of the community, and its trust. It has been over a year since the last officer-involved shooting fatality in Visalia. Jason Salazar, VPD captain, said that body cameras were just as much an asset to the community as to police officers themselves. Salazar cited a study that said 60 percent of physical force went down for both the suspects and the police when they knew they were being filmed. There was also an 80 percent reduction in complaints to police department.

The VPD first implemented an in-car video system in the early 1990's. The system is now installed in 80% of the cars and will have 100% implementation in two to three years. But there is a huge difference between recording video in a public space, such as outside a patrol car, and inside someone's home. Salazar said that the question of privacy is actually the biggest issue facing the nations' police departments when using body cams.

Questions arise when the people inside a home do not want to be filmed. There is also speculation on whether witnesses would want to speak knowing they were on camera. Further is the issue of what is considered a public record and what is not. Any video taken by police would be considered public record unless it will be used as evidence. If someone wanted to snoop on their neighbor's domestic squabbles, or stakeout their neighbor's home, they could theoretically request the video on the grounds that it is a public record.

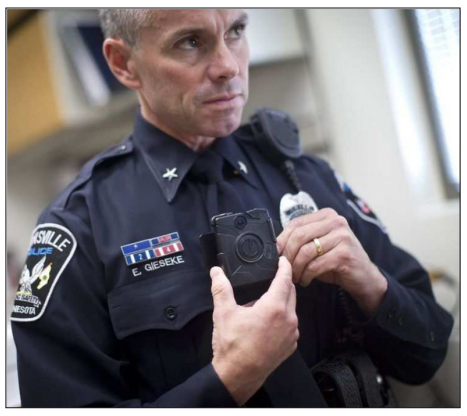
Besides privacy issues, there are currently no budgeted funds for the cameras in the VPD. Mayor Steve Nelsen said to Salazar that, "If you need it then the council needs to find a way to pay for it."

To fully equip the department would cost an estimated $74,000 to $82,000. It would then cost an additional $25,000 to $92,000 per year to maintain and store the huge amount of data generated every day. The cost variance depends on whether the VPD uses the cloud to store all the videos or an in-house service. Doing the storage in-house would be the cheaper option. How long the data needs to be legally stored is also a question for the research committee and will affect the cost of the program.

Because officer-involved shootings, perceived as epidemic, have reached the national stage, both Sacramento and Washington, D.C. have jumped into the fray. Legislation is pending in both cities that will dictate proper procedures and protocols surrounding the use of body cameras. Salazar predicted body cameras will become mandatory equipment for every police officer and that, along with the legislation, grants or matching funds will be offered to pay for the equipment.

Presently, the city council is satisfied with the VPD's first step of appointing a research committee. Until key questions about how long to store the data, privacy issues, proper protocols and funding sources are answered, the city council is happy to move slowly. There is also the reality of quickly changing technology. The longer Visalia waits, the newer the technology the police department will be using. Right now the VPD is leaning towards the chest-mounted camera while Fresno is using the epaulette and Google-glasses format. Salazar mentioned that technology is moving faster than legislation; there are now cameras that can see through walls, which conflict with the laws concerning search warrants.

Councilmember Greg Collins emphasized that there is no need to rush into anything. There is no legislation mandating a program yet, so the VPD has time to develop good protocol in the camera's use. Mayor Nelsen was heartened by the fact that the VPD had not rushed into implementing a program. He encouraged the department to learn from the experience of other departments and make slow and steady movement forward. He was encouraged by



the VPD's being proactive in its research into body cameras and not having a knee-jerk reaction to the national scene.

The *Valley Voice* reported in the January 1 issue that the Lemoore Police Department has been using body cameras for 10 years whereas the Tulare Police Department hasn't yet started exploring the issue. The Farmersville and Exeter police departments are already in the testing stage.

According to Greg Gomez, Mayor of Farmersville, "We approved the program back in December. I think it's a good thing, it protects both the citizens and the city should there ever be any issues that arise. We had assurances from the PD that the video captured will be protected to protect privacy."

The VPD's goal is to resolve these issues, identify finding sources, and implement a body camera program in 2015.

Local Law Enforcement Holds Farewell for Sheriff Bill Whittman

On January 24, the Tulare County Sheriff's Department threw a retirement party for one of its own, former Sheriff Bill Wittman. Many local law enforcement, elected officials and family were on hand to celebrate Wittman's 20- year career with the County. Several sheriffs from surrounding counties also attended as the number of party goers reached 300.

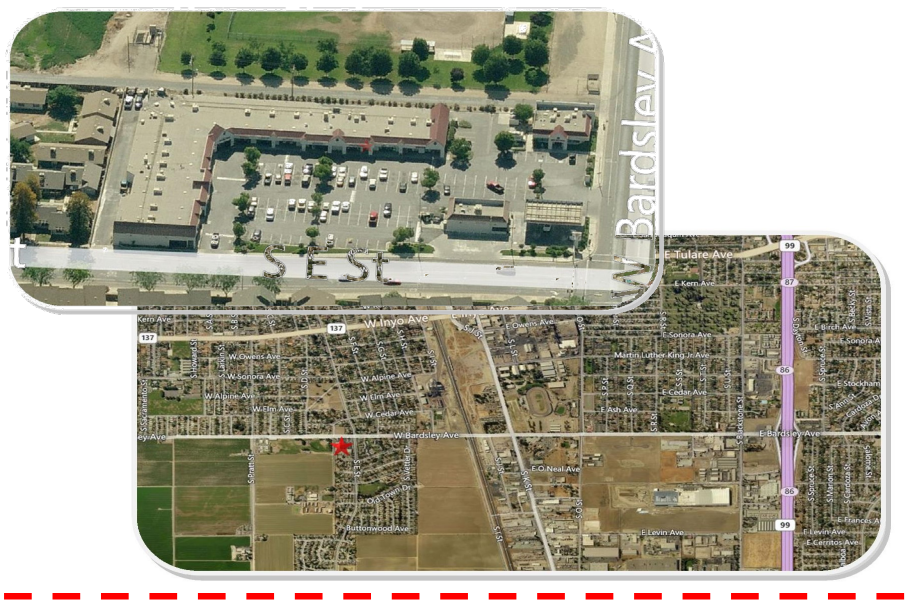
On October 4, 2013 Wittman announced he would be stepping down as sheriff for medical reasons. His announcement that he would not be seeking re-election, cleared the way for undersheriff, Mike Boudreaux, to run for the office.

Wittman served as Tulare County Sheriff and Coroner for five terms. He said during his retirement party, his one regret was that he had to leave so abruptly. One day he was at work and the next day he was not. A year and a half later he was happy to be able to give his friends and co-workers a proper farewell.

"Sheriff Wittman's retirement party celebrated a long and honorable law enforcement career that made a positive impact in Visalia as a police lieutenant, and in Tulare County as the sheriff. He truly cared for the people he worked with and served. We wish the best for him in his retirement," Jason Salazar, Visalia Police Department Captain, said.

Mike Boudreaux, John Anderson (Retired), Bill Wittman, Margaret Mims, Edward Bonner, and David Robinson.

Retail Spaces
FOR RENT



SWC Bardsley Avenue & E Street., Tulare

Tenants include Super Stop Food Mart/Gas, JJ's Cowboy Café, Super Mercado Julian and many more!

Call for **FREE RENT SPECIALS** !

(559) 688-3300

Jan Lazarus, Broker/Owner
Redwood Realty, BRE#01201762

Palmer Company Insurance

HOME • AUTO • FARM
COMMERCIAL • LIFE • HEALTH

(559) 562-2522 111 W. Honolulu, Lindsay

IBA WEST

With life insurance, the benefits live on.

Justin Mosley, Agent
Insurance Lic#: 0I02569
991 N Blackstone Street
Tulare, CA 93274
Bus: 559-688-1888

State Farm Insurance Company (Not licensed in MA, NY or WI)
State Farm Life and Accident Assurance Company
(Licensed in NY and WI)
Bloomington, IL
1311019

There are also benefits now.
I'll show you how life insurance can come in handy for more immediate family needs, like college.
We put the life back in life insurance.
CALL ME TODAY.

StateFarm™

TCAC

Continued from p. 1

hours before he would have been fired.

Tulare County had 30 days from the time of being served to respond to the suit. Instead, they requested an extension because of the Christmas and New Year's holidays. On January 15 of this year, the county filed their answer to the complaint.

According to Grenseman and Jimenez' lawyer, John Sarsfield, "They entered what is called a 'general denial' on behalf of the county and all named defendants. A general denial is the equivalent in criminal law of a 'not guilty' plea. It simply puts the plaintiff on notice to be prepared to prove the allegations in the complaint. The discovery process will start shortly."

The county hired a firm in Fresno, McCormick, Barstow, Sheppard, Wayte & Carruth LLP, to co-represent it. Grenseman was perplexed as to why Tulare County didn't use one of the 20 lawyers on its payroll.

"It's a gross mismanagement of the taxpayers' money," he said. "Instead of doing the right thing and approaching my attorneys with a resolution, they are content to just keep this going at great expense to the Tulare County tax payer and are sending this money out of county to a private law firm."

Grenseman added, if the case goes to trial it could cost up to $1 million in legal fees because the Fresno firm is very expensive. If the two former TCAC employees are in fact guilty of the long list of crimes for which the county accuses them, it shouldn't take a high-powered law firm in Fresno to find them guilty.

The next court date is March 10 in Department #7 with Judge Hillman named for the Case Management Conference (CMC). At the CMC the court will set the trial date and mediation date.

In the mean time, one of the defendants has disappeared. Sarsfield said they have not been able to serve Yessica Ozuna because they have not been able to find her.

"When you can't find a defendant to serve them, after a period of time and documented effort, you can get a court to authorize service by publication,' said Sarsfield. " Essentially, you run (with the court's permission) a legal notice in a newspaper of record an ad that says 'Dear missing defendant, you've been sued. You need to come to court and answer or a default judgment can be taken against you.' If the person still doesn't answer, the plaintiff can take a default and wins."

According to the county's response to the suit, they are demanding a trial by jury. That's a risky proposition in any court case, but it just got riskier for the county because they just lost their case against Jimenez with the Employment Development Department (EDD). The EDD is the state organization that determines if someone deserves unemployment benefits.

When someone is fired they receive unemployment benefits unless the employee got fired for egregious or criminal behavior. The county declared that Jimenez' was just such a case and attempted to get her unemployment benefits denied.

After months of waiting, Jimenez got a hearing mid December. The county took long enough to testify that the hearing was extended to January. Grenseman, who was called as a witness, felt the county did this on purpose so Jimenez would not receive any benefits before Christmas.

The county indicated at the December hearing that it planned on bringing witnesses to the hearing in January. The county ended up bowing out and not attending the January hearing. Sarsfield and his partner, Maggie Melo, received the judgment in Jimenez' favor the last week of January. If the county could not prove its case to the EDD, it might be advisable for it not to take the chance on a trial by jury.

The Case of Clyde: A Missing Dog

The Tulare County Sheriff's Department has not made much headway in the case of the dog, Clyde, who was stolen from TCAC on January 5. Many accusations have been thrown around about the break-in at TCAC, and the dog's owner, Wendy Jones, is still perusing her legal case against the county for illegally seizing her dog without a search warrant.

Trouble started for Jones' family when, on October 28 of last year, her dog, Clyde, bit Jones' grandson. Because the dog caused injury to a child, Jones had to prove that Clyde was not a danger to society. The dog has no prior incidents of vicious behavior or of biting.

In November and December 2014 there were three hearings concerning Clyde's fate. The first hearing, that seemed to be going in Jones' favor, was invalidated by county council before a decision was rendered. At a second hearing, it was determined that the dog was a menace to society and was ordered to be euthanized. Jones appealed the case and lost, which gave her five days to file papers with the Tulare County Superior Court to request a trial.

Between the lost appeal and Jones' filing with the superior court, Clyde was allegedly stolen from the TCAC facility. According to Jones, Clyde should not have been at TCAC in the first place, as Deputy Young of the Tulare County Sheriff's Department and an off-duty animal control officer in uniform, Chris Carothers, seized Clyde from a private kennel without a warrant.

The county Media Officer put out the following press release, "Sometime during the evening of January 4, or morning of January 5, someone cut the fences at the adjacent building and then broke into the Animal Control facility."

Several accusations have been circulating since the day Clyde disappeared. When the news hit the streets, the primary suspect was either Jones or her son. During the sheriff's investigation of the TCAC break-in, Detective Judd Hembree of the Sheriff's Department went over to Jones' son's workplace on January 5 and, according to Jones, accused him of stealing the dog.

On January 14, Detective Hembree went to Jones' house to question her about the break-in. During his visit at Jones' house, Hembree said that he now suspected the bitten child's grandfather. Hembree told Jones that after a little investigation he speculated that the grandfather stole the dog, killed him, and then did away with the remains so no one would ever find them.

Jones was very upset to hear the detective's speculations, she said. She does not know why he shared that information with her. She is still hoping to find her dog alive, though the more time that passes, the less likely that is.

Jones added, before the news of Clyde's disappearance had been made public, the grandfather accused Jones of breaking Clyde out of the animal shelter. He also posted pictures of his injured grandson on his Facebook page to elicit sympathy.

The third hypothesis is that the dog died on or before January 4. A person familiar with TCAC, who did not want to be named, said that, "I do not believe that anyone broke into animal control and stole him. It is likely that TCAC jumped the gun and euthanized Clyde and they staged this break in to cover their tracks."

Everyone agrees that Clyde's disappearance seems to have been an inside job, or engineered by someone intimately familiar with the facility. An outsider would not have known how to reach the quarantine area, enter a pen full of vicious and sick animals, then willingly handle what is considered a vicious pit bull.

Even with the uncertainty of Clyde's whereabouts, Jones filed an emergency stay on January 9 to save his life. This is to prevent TCAC from putting the dog down if he is found alive. Tulare County Superior Court put her case off until April 16, when there will be a hearing on whether the matter should go to court or be settled.

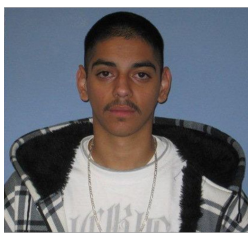
Jones wants the case to go to court because of the various constitutional rights violations she felt were committed by the Tulare County Sheriff's Department and TCAC. Even if Clyde is found to have been killed, Jones plans on pursuing the case to vindicate him and honor his life.

While the case is pending the county is forbidden to proceed against the dog if and when the he shows up. Right now Jones has an appeal pending in the 5th district appellate court in Fresno.

Exeter Gang Members Found Guilty of Conspiracy to Rob Undercover DEA Agent

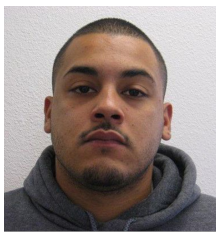
Staff Reports

On January 22, a Tulare County jury found Gustavo Mendoza, 23, Joel Serrato, 25, and Miguel Villegas, 22, guilty of conspiracy to commit robbery with a special allegation that the conspiracy was gang related. In addition to the charge of conspiracy, Mendoza and Villegas were each found guilty of attempted robbery with a gang allegation and personal use of a firearm.



Joel Serrato

Gustavo Mendoza



Miguel Villegas

Mendoza and Serrato were also found guilty of being felons in possession of a firearm with a gang allegation, and Mendoza was found guilty of wearing a mask while in possession of a firearm in public, with a gang allegation. Mendoza had previously been convicted of a felony assault with a deadly weapon with a gang allegation in 2010. At the time of the crimes, all three defendants were Exeter residents.

In January of 2014, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) arranged an undercover buy of oxycodone. The buy was initially planned to take place in a Visalia hotel parking lot; detectives from the Visalia Police Department (VPD) working with the DEA, set up surveillance in the area. The DEA and VPD officers observed Mendoza and Villegas walking toward a waiting undercover DEA agent. But before the buy could take place, Mendoza and Villegas spotted the surveillance and left the area.

Within minutes, the undercover agent received a text informing him that law enforcement was in the area and demanding that the drug transaction be moved to another location. The operation relocated and soon the undercover agent was approached by Mendoza and Villegas, who were now wearing masks. Mendoza had his right hand under his left arm and appeared to be holding a firearm. The DEA agent believed that Mendoza and Villegas were about to rob him and left the area.

A surveillance officer drove up beside Mendoza and Villegas as they drove away and saw the barrel of a firearm sticking out from under Mendoza's arm. Once patrol vehicles were in place, the defendants were pulled over on Highway 198 just north of Exeter. A search of the vehicle revealed a loaded .45 caliber pistol. At trial, Mendoza and Serrato admitted to being gang members.

The defendants are scheduled to be sentenced in Department 10 on February 24, where Mendoza will face a possible sentence of 33 years, four months in prison. Serrato will face 12 years, four months' incarceration, while Villegas will face a total of 13 years in prison.

All photos courtesy Tulare County Sheriff's Department

Transitions Children's Services
BECOME A FOSTER PARENT!
Open your heart and home to a child in need.
(559) 623-9124
www.transitionschildrensservices.org
Licenced Facility Number: 547206864

Apartments available
Casa Grande
Senior Care Home & Assisted Living
www.casagrandeseniorcarehomes.com
347 E. Walnut, Visalia (559) 733-0233

Conservation Tillage Aids Central Valley Farmer During Drought

Cecilia Parsons

Like many other farmers in the San Joaquin Valley, Mike McRee was water-poor in the summer of 2014. Very low rainfall meant a lack of soil moisture and a decline in groundwater levels. A dairy producer, McRee milks close to 2,000 cows and double crops his own dairy forage on about 850 acres near Chowchilla. Without normal surface water deliveries due to the drought, McRee saw higher energy costs to pump all his irrigation water. He credit's the water saving capability of conservation tillage (CT) for helping his crops and his farm stay productive.

Conservation tillage is soil cultivation that leaves the previous season's crop residue on fields before and after planting the next crop. The most common methods in the San Joaquin Valley are strip till, where only a narrow strip is tilled for a seedbed, and no-till, where one crop is planted directly into the residue of the next crop without any soil disturbance. A significant reduction in particulates from dust and diesel emissions is also a key benefit of conservation tillage.

One of the earliest innovators in CT, McRee has made some changes in his forage production system due to uncertainty of water supplies – going with shorter season varieties and using drip irrigation where possible, but he points to his soil's increased water holding capacity as one of CT's greatest benefits.

McRee said, when he first started with CT he received advice from University of California crop systems specialist Jeff Mitchell and fellow dairyman Dino Giacomazzi. Since that time, he has been involved in efforts to share CT knowledge with other growers in partnership with Sustainable Conservation, a nonprofit organization that promotes agricultural practices that work for farmers and the environment.

McRee's forage crop system was one of the highlights of a recent Sustainable Conservation CT bus tour. The annual bus tour highlights the most innovative farmers practicing conservation tillage in the San Joaquin Valley.

"Mike McRee's farm was a valuable part of the tour as it gave us an opportunity to see his successes and his challenges," said Ladi Asgill, senior project manager at Sustainable Conservation.

McRee's said his loss of surface water deliveries has caused him to pay close attention to water use and how it affects his soil.

"I've noticed a huge increase in the water holding capacity of my ground since I've gone with CT. With conventional tillage we had sealing-off issues and much less water infiltration," McRee said. "The tilth of the soil was terrible at first, but after three or four years of CT, it has really mellowed out."

With his ground's increased water holding capacity, McRee said he is able to spread his irrigation intervals out over the growing season as well as decrease the number of irrigations. In his flood-irrigated fields, he said there is also improved consistency in the soil's ability to absorb water. That improvement has led to more consistent forage crop stands and more consistent yields overall.

"Initially I was just interested in saving passes through the fields, using less fuel and labor, but I found that there are numerous benefits to conservation tillage throughout the growing season. There has been a huge difference in my soil since starting CT. It has really mellowed out. The tilth, the organic matter, the earthworms. Those things are giving me more consistent crop yields from year to year. No more extreme highs and lows."

McRee said that visits to Midwestern farms where CT is commonly used led to his conviction that CT would fit in with his forage operation.

"In the Midwest they aren't worried about saving soil moisture like we are here, they generally have plenty of that. They use CT to warm up the soil for planting. We have different needs here, but I believed it was doable on my operation," he said.

McRee said, that since he first began CT on his ground in 2007, there has been considerable interest from neighbors who also grow forage crops. He used his CT equipment to do some custom fieldwork for them and many growers have adopted and adapted CT systems for their own use.

"It's rare to see conventional farmed corn silage around here now," McRee said.

He also grows tomatoes and alfalfa, but hasn't tried CT on those crops. Other than the drip on 120 acres, McRee uses flood irrigation on his silage crops. Drip irrigation will take more time to apply water, but McRee said he would not only save water, but also save time getting back into the field. He is also thinking about planting into dry ground and letting the moisture move up to the seed.

McRee admits that some of his first attempts with CT did not go well. He tried no-till wheat, but hard, compacted soils stymied him. He began with an Orthman 1tRIPr strip till tool, but found he needed to go deeper to increase water infiltration. At this point he feels he has the right equipment to do the job, noting that is key to success with conservation tillage.

Working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), McRee has been able to tap into funding through the agency's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This NRCS program assists growers with implementation of practices to improve soil, water, air and other resources.

McRee does a fall primary tillage, ripping down to 18 inches on heavier soils with a Wilcox 7 shank with crumbler. Vertical tillage, he noted, has replaced disking to achieve a smooth seedbed without turning soil completely over.

"This keeps the organic matter in the top three inches of the soil," McRee said. It is still important to manage that organic matter, he noted. Trash wheels on his strip finisher tool help with that when necessary.

Preparation for corn silage planting begins after winter forage is harvested. McRee explains that he rips down 13-14 inches and uses coulters to pack the seedbed. After pre-irrigation, he uses the Dawn Pluribus strip till row unit, a tool that preps an eight-inch band of soil for planting. Using GPS, McRee said he can run his tractor 6-7 mph for this pass.

"With three passes I can do everything," he said. Depending on field conditions, he will decide if an herbicide application is necessary prior to planting. Most of the time, McRee said, he will spray post-planting when weed pressure is determined. He said he has also learned to pay attention to water management prior to harvest because of compaction issues.

Mike McRee inspects strip-tilled soil after implement pass.

McRee said when he started using his strip finisher he actually achieved two goals: the smoother field was easier on his equipment when he drilled in seed and his stands were much more consistent from one end of the field to the other. With experience and consideration for soil types and field conditions, McRee did some custom design for strip till tools. He also had some cultipack wheels custom made to disrupt less stubble.

Pointing out a field just to the west of his dairy, McRee said he strip tilled only one half of the 80-acre field and the rest was tilled conventionally. It was clear which was which.

"The conventionally tilled ground was hard and yields were lower than in the strip tilled field," he said.

Sustainable Conservation has promoted CT throughout the San Joaquin Valley over the last decade by bringing together business, landowners, the University of California Cooperative Extension, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more information about how Sustainable Conservation helps California thrive, visit www.suscon.org.

The Whitlatch Group
525 W. Center, Ste D
Visalia, ,CA 93291

Bill Whitlatch , GRI, RE Masters ™
BRE Lic #00874715 Real Estate Broker
559-732-3034
Email: bill@whitlatch.net

FOR SALE

1048 NORTH MARCIN STREET, VISALIA

5,000 Sq. Ft. (4.000 Sq. Ft. Warehouse space and 1,000 Sq. Ft. Office Space)
Ideal for general contractor or a distribution center. Easy access to Highway 198.

$299,000

The Whitlatch Group
Helping to Develop Your Future
www.whitlatchre.com

The information in this report is deemed to be reliable, but cannot be guaranteed. This condition applies generally throughout the report and specifically to square footage calculations.

40 Years in Downtown Visalia

MICHAEL'S Custom Jewelry
559-734-7079
316 W. Main St., Visalia, CA 93291
www.michaelscustomjewelry.com

Certified Gemologist Appraiser

COMPLIMENTARY CLEANING AND INSPECTION OF YOUR JEWELRY
3-D DESIGNS
CERTIFIED APPRAISALS
FINE ENGRAVING
RING SIZING
RESTRINGING
WATCH REPAIR
WATCH BATTERIES
WATCH BANDS
STONE REPLACEMENT
PRONG RETIPPING
FREE GIFT WRAPPING WITH PURCHASE

North Visalia, Greater Oval Area, Specific Needs and Opportunities Assessment

Bill Huott

Thank you City Council and City manager for all your work.

Thanks for all the improvements.

Thanks to City staff, too many to name, and especially VPD and Chief Mestas.

Celebrate the complete transformation of the north Visalia area (Between Mooney and Cain) from crime ridden to revitalize driven!

Below is my humble, unique, vision of (central) north Visalia, needs and opportunities. The main goal and focus is for the betterment of the area for the youth and families growing up in this area.

1. Fix Route 63 through the Oval area, both going north and going south. The most densely packed and walkable area of the city needs equality of traffic signals as intersections downtown. The South route from Houston to Murray needs traffic calming, traffic signals and safe pedestrian crossings. I have a knowledgeable and workable plan.

2. Move, plan, brainstorm, mentor resources into the area. This will put a spike in the heart of the two Gang Injunction Zone areas and mentality. Revitalize two long vacant buildings on Northeast Third and one on Court and put out to bid for worthy nonprofit entities to bring their expertise to the area exactly like the Creative Center does for its focused population. Move PAL immediately as close to these needy youth as possible, make it the best, new, next door neighbor. Youth will thrive with this positive, walkable resource in the heart of need.

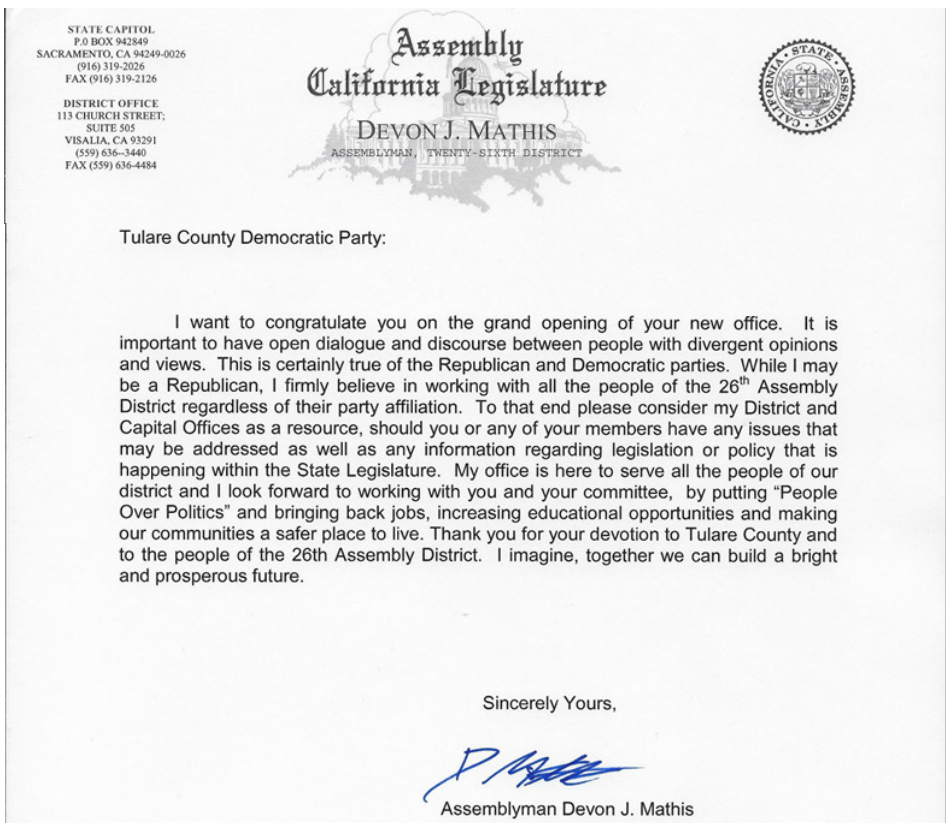
3. Underground the utilities above Houston Ave into underground vaults. This fabulous, one of a kind, second Main Street is a bustle of activity. It's smart growth, mixing of residential, business, vibrant, it's the future now! Move the trolley line to Houston, Mooney to Lovers Lane for youth going back and forth daily to schools. Drive it one morning. See the American future on foot and in car. Take people out of their cars and put them on this unique, people mover on this singular, north Visalia artery.

4. Invest in the City's most famous, glorious, Phoenix, rising from the ashes, park, Oval Park.

5. Millions of dollars built a bridge over 198 on Santa Fe. Spend the measure G road funds to build and finish the road and trail on Santa Fe from Houston to Riggin to St John's River, complete this key, north Visalia road and bike trail.

6. Plan new, futuristic, pocket parks in the area around Houston Elementary. West of Rinaldi, no park, lots of Kids. North of Sweet, no park, lots of kids. Around Highland elementary, lots of kids, no park. Security is job number one to create a safe area for kids and parents to go out safely into their neighborhood. Think of these as little outposts of good. Bring Officers to these areas to open the beautifully fenced and outfitted parks in the morning, lock it at night, bring Officers regularly into these areas for relationships with the neighbors, meet them, talk to them, in their language, not just responding Officers to the latest, drama, teenage, lost soul, violent, street encounter. These pockets of safety will grow and birth a multitude of connected, future leaders from the kids in these areas. Don't look at this meeting the neighbors duty, as an imposition to shirk, but an opportunity for relationships to embrace.

The previous is an editorial by Bill Huott.



STATE CAPITOL
P.0 BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0026
(916) 319-2026
FAX (916) 319-2126

DISTRICT OFFICE
113 CHURCH STREET;
SUITE 505
VISALIA, CA 93291
(559) 636--3440
FAX (559) 636-4484

Assembly
California Legislature

DEVON J. MATHIS
ASSEMBLYMAN, TWENTY-SIXTH DISTRICT

Tulare County Democratic Party:

I want to congratulate you on the grand opening of your new office. It is important to have open dialogue and discourse between people with divergent opinions and views. This is certainly true of the Republican and Democratic parties. While I may be a Republican, I firmly believe in working with all the people of the 26th Assembly District regardless of their party affiliation. To that end please consider my District and Capital Offices as a resource, should you or any of your members have any issues that may be addressed as well as any information regarding legislation or policy that is happening within the State Legislature. My office is here to serve all the people of our district and I look forward to working with you and your committee, by putting "People Over Politics" and bringing back jobs, increasing educational opportunities and making our communities a safer place to live. Thank you for your devotion to Tulare County and to the people of the 26th Assembly District. I imagine, together we can build a bright and prosperous future.

Sincerely Yours,

Assemblyman Devon J. Mathis

Mathis

Continued from p. 1

Republican Rudy Mendoza in part by promising to "put people over politics."

"I believe in small government," Mathis said during last year's campaign, "that a Government is by the people for the people. That we need to give the power back to our local levels, back to our cities and counties, they know what needs to be done and they need to power to do so. We do not need a big government that gets in the way of our daily lives and interferes with our businesses."

Before running for the Assembly, Mendoza, the current mayor of Woodlake, had worked as Congressman Devin Nunes' field representative--the go -between the congressman and his constituents in the southernpartofTulareCounty--since2010.

Since his election, Mathis has been assigned to the following committees: Aging and Long-Term Care; Agriculture; Water, Parks and Wildlife. He also sits as Vice-chair on the Veterans Affairs Committee.

Mathis presented his congratulatory letter to Macareno and the committee at 6pm, before the scheduled ribbon cutting. Earlier, Mathis had communicated his intention to attend the ceremony.

While hopeful that Mathis would indeed attend, Macareno did admit to some doubt. "At the last minute I thought he might send a rep. instead," he said, pleasantly surprised.

Macareno and California Democratic Party Regional Director Diana Love addressed the guests, who were provided time to speak as well.

"When I read about tonight's Democratic opening, I felt invited to be here and around good people," said Buddy Jones, of Visalia. "I am happy to be here."

"It was nice to see new faces such as Jones and others, as well as familiar ones. It's what we are shooting for," said Macareno.

"Although we had many Democrats, Republicans were represented," he continued, "I did say open to the public."

In memory of Kiya 2007 - 2015

Kiya, a wonderful companion and best friend at Quail Park Memory Care Residences in Visalia, passed away on January 12. For the past eight years, Kiya brought pure joy to residents and their families alike. Before becoming a permanent member of the Quail Park family, Kiya was found wandering the community without a home by one of the cottage residents. After she completed obedience training, Kiya quickly became friends with everyone, comforting many residents in Memory Care. She is deeply missed.

State of the Union Comments from Tulare County Democratic Chairman

The President delivered the state of the union and it was "good news" as described by the President.

It was important that he pointed out that naysayers said how all was doomed if Obamacare would become an reality. Because the reality is quite the opposite.

We have both Democrats and Republicans who are good people with good legislation proposals and policies. We as voters need to listen to what is being said to move America forward. Instead of being stuck in the arena of partisan politics, our elected officials need to concentrate on what is best for all Americans from the local, state and federal level.

Addressing health care, child care, education, jobs, fair wages, higher minimum wage and many other domestic issues all address directly issues that residents here face. Its important that voters think about their concerns and don't vote against their interests because of partisan politics. For instance, who more would benefit from free community college than those who live here in Tulare County and the region, an economically depressed area.

President Obama offered a vision of a healthier economy, a stronger and safer internet so that we, as a nation, are competitive across the world. I agree with the President that the tax code needs to be fair across the board for our growth and economy.

The President's strong stance on terrorism was an important point as it appears more and more terrorist acts are becoming a commonplace. Its good that he stands behind the position that the entire responsibility to address terrorism is not our country's alone but that of the global community.

This Presidency is forward thinking, this is best demonstrated by ending the Cuban embargo.

However the President's impression of an united America is what stayed with me most. He has seen a united America up close since his Presidency. This cannot be more true as we see the same here. When we talk to our neighbors, work with parents in booster clubs, city and school committees and gather at community events. We are the same. We want the same. We need the same. We are one. This was the most important message our President shared tonight.

We are a family. We are one America.

Ruben Macareno

Tulare County Democratic Party Chairman

Sierra Bancorp Reports Earnings and Declares Quarterly Cash Dividend

Staff Reports

Porterville-based Sierra Bancorp (Nasdaq: BSRR), parent of Bank of the Sierra, announced its unaudited financial results for the quarter and the year ending December 31, 2014. Sierra Bancorp recognized a net income of $15.240 million for 2014, an improvement of $1.871 million--14%--relative to its net income in 2013.

The increase over the prior year is the result of higher net interest income, gains on the sale of OREO, non-recurring investment gains and a reduced loan loss provision. These favorable variances were partially offset by non-recurring costs stemming from its acquisition of Santa Clara Valley Bank, lower deposit service charge income, higher costs resulting from its core software conversion in early 2014, higher salaries and benefits expense, and a higher tax accrual rate.

The company's return on average assets was 1.03% in 2014, up from 0.96% in 2013. The company's return on average equity also increased to 8.18% in 2014 from 7.56% in 2013, and diluted earnings per share increased to $1.08 in 2014 from $0.94 in 2013. For the fourth quarter of 2014 Sierra Bancorp had a net income of $3.653 million, an annualized return on average equity of 7.73%, and a return on average assets of 0.93%.

Total assets were up $227 million--16%--in 2014, due primarily to net growth of $167 million in gross loan balances and an $87 million increase in investments, partially offset by a lower level of non-earning cash and due from banks. Loan volume was favorably impacted by the purchase of $33 million in residential mortgage loans in March, growth of $33 million in outstanding balances on mortgage warehouse lines, strong organic growth in agricultural loans and commercial real estate loans, and the addition of approximately $62 million in balances in November via its acquisition of $44 million in investment securities from Santa Clara Valley Bank.

Total nonperforming assets, including nonperforming loans and foreclosed assets, were reduced by $21 million--46%--during the year.Total deposits increased $193 million--16%--during 2014, with approximately $108 million of that growth coming from its whole-bank acquisition. Non-deposit borrowings increased $25 million.

"The recently-concluded year was an extremely busy and eventful one for us, with noteworthy results including the launch of the bank's management succession plan, a core system conversion, the upgrade of customer-facing technology, the rebranding of the bank, and the successful execution of a whole-bank acquisition," said James C. Holly, Chief Executive Officer.

"Acquisition costs negatively impacted our financial performance, but those costs were lower than originally projected and were largely offset by other favorable variances. We're very pleased with the robust financial results achieved in 2014, including a dramatic reduction in nonperforming assets, strong loan and deposit growth, and increased net income," he added. "We feel that the stage is set for a successful year in 2015, as well, and I look forward to participating in the continued growth and progress of Sierra Bancorp and Bank of the Sierra."

Last month Sierra Bancorp (Nasdaq:BSRR), parent of Bank of the Sierra, announced that its board of directors declared a regular quarterly cash dividend of ten cents per share, an increase of 11% relative to the dividend paid the previous quarter. The dividend was approved after the board's review of the company's financial results for the quarter and the year ending on December 31, 2014, which demonstrate capital strength, relatively vigorous net income, robust loan and deposit growth due in part to the company's recent acquisition of Santa Clara Valley Bank, and a continued favorable trend in credit quality and nonperforming assets.

The dividend will be paid on February 12, 2015 to shareholders of record as of January 29, 2015. Including dividends paid by Bank of the Sierra prior to the formation of Sierra Bancorp, the company has paid regular cash dividends to shareholders every year since 1987, comprised of annual dividends from 1987 through 1998 and quarterly dividends since then. The dividend noted in today's announcement marks the Company's 64th consecutive regular quarterly cash dividend.

Sierra Bancorp is the holding company for Bank of the Sierra (www.bankofthesierra.com), which is in its 38th year of operations and at over $1.6 billion in assets is the largest independent bank headquartered in the South San Joaquin Valley. The company has more than 400 employees conducting business through 28 branch offices, an online branch, a real estate industries center, an agricultural credit center, and a Small Business Administration (SBA) center.

Tulare County's Only Strip Club to Reopen

Catherine Doe

The only adult live entertainment business in Tulare County will reopen after overcoming a daunting set of obstacles. At the January 27 Board of Supervisors meeting, the Board voted 5-0 to renew Saints and Sinners' operating license.

Saints and Sinners is a strip club located south of Lindsay at 807 South Mirage. The business has been closed for more than a year, as it worked on rectifying various building code violations. When the strip club tried to renew its license in August, the Tulare County Tax Collector's office denied its application at the request of the sheriff's department.

At the end of the public hearing, where both county council and business owner Marilu Lopez gave testimony, Supervisor Phil Cox said that there was not enough evidence to deny Saints and Sinners a license to conduct business.

Supervisor Allen Ishida said that the business was in his district and that it has always been a bar. He said, the bar was shut down in 2007, adding, "we should have kept it shut down." Saints and Sinners used to be El Campesino, and lost its liquor license when Tulare County sheriffs went into the establishment under cover. They discovered prostitution, drugs and an under-aged cocktail waitress. It was also revealed that drugs were being sold at the residence behind the business, which also belongs to the family. Lopez' husband was charged with felony possession of a weapon and narcotics.

Despite the buildings' history, Ishida said, concerning the strip club, it didn't generate any more police calls than other establishments that serve alcohol. He agreed with Supervisor Cox that there was not enough evidence to deny the business a license.

At the beginning of the public hearing the club faced building code violations, zoning violations and accusations by the sheriff's department of criminal activity in and around the club. Lopez was also accused of lying on her application to renew her business license.

Victor Perez, a former Tulare County planning commissioner, and council for Lopez, patiently chipped away at the county council's case. There were building code violations but Jason LoBue, city planner for the Resource Management Agency, testified that Lopez had complied with everything that the planning department had asked her to. LoBue added that now that the building was up to code, the county could change its zoning within four weeks, from C-2 to C-3, the required zoning for Lopez' type of business.

Lieutenant Gary Hunt from the Tulare County Sheriff's Department testified that Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux had very serious concerns about the business owner's integrity. A main reason the sheriff's department requested that the county deny her a license, Hunt said, was the fact that Lopez lied on her business application, which enquires if the applicant has been convicted of a misdemeanor in the previous 10 years, or charged with a misdemeanor in the previous five years, not including moving violations.

Lopez marked "no." Hunt revealed that Lopez had a warrant out for her arrest. Whether this meant she was to be charged with a misdemeanor was left unclear; after the hearing, Boudreaux said that the warrant for Lopez' arrest was too lengthy for him to remember all the details.

Hunt also went through a list of calls to which the sheriff's department had responded. These involved underage drinking, alleged rape, assaults, discharge of a weapon and vandalism. But none of the calls resulted in charges or arrests. It was further established that the club did not generate more calls, about two per year, than any other establishment that serves alcohol.

After the testimony, Sheriff Boudreaux said that the county council failed to point out lap dancing, physical touching and the presence of drugs. He said that the strip club did not comply with the regulation that the patrons need to stay 10 feet away from any stage with dancing girls upon it, and that there has to be a barrier. He said that this former bar, now strip club, has a history of attracting crime and being a problem.

"They have not shown a good faith effort on the owner's part to make it a safe business," he said. "My main concern is keeping the public safe."

It did not take the supervisors very long in closed session, to decide that there was no case against the strip club. Various hypothesis arose as to why Saints and Sinners lost its license in the first place. Perez declared in his closing statement that the problems was the type of business.

"We are a Bible-thumping community," he said.

Religion shouldn't determine which types of business can stay open and which ones cannot. He felt as if Lopez had been singled out and that her business had been treated differently because it was a strip club. A visibly upset relative stated during an earlier supervisor's meeting that Lopez was being singled out because hers is a Hispanic-owned business.

The fact remains that on August 6, 2014, the Tulare County Tax Collector's office received a report from the sheriff's department denying a business license for Saints and Sinners Gentleman's Club based on reports of illegal activity. That is why the strip club was shut down, a fate similar to another Tulare County adult-oriented business, Sugar Daddys, owned by a Caucasian.

Saints & Sinner Gentlemen's Club in Lindsay

In 2004, the planning commission denied a permit for Sugar Daddys, saying it was detrimental to the public safety, peace and welfare of the community. But back in 2004, there was no set policy for strip clubs. The application for a business license at that time stated that an "adult live entertainment" facility could exist; however, another clause said that there could be no nudity.

Sugar Daddys did reopen and the county refined its business application to address the realities of adult-oriented businesses. Sugar Daddys changed its name to Sundowner Card Room and remained a card room and strip club until about six months ago, when it discontinued the strip club.

Lopez' reaction to the board of supervisors' decision was a cross between disbelief, excitement and relief. Her family is planning a special event for a grand reopening which will happen during the first or second weekend in February.

Visalia City Council Holds Daylong Retreat

Catherine Doe

The Visalia City Council held its yearly retreat at Cafe 210 on January 23. Discussion started with a review of 2014's accomplishments, followed by the council's goals for 2015--and beyond.

Visalia City Manager Mike Olmos went over a list of accomplishments that covered everything from the Visalia Airport to the Convention Center. Mayor Steve Nelsen said he found after looking back over his five-year tenure, many projects came to fruition in 2014.

The two biggest accomplishments are the Animal Care Facility (The current Animal Control Facility is located by the Visalia Municipal Airport off of Highway 99; the new building is being built immediately adjacent to the north.) and the South West Fire Station located by the old College of the Sequoias farm, he said. The Animal Care Facility was many years in the making, but is now almost complete. The facility should be open this summer. For the fire station, a contractor has been chosen and the official groundbreaking is February 5.

One of the intangibles, for which Nelsen was grateful, was how the department heads and manager took to heart his wish that staff think outside of the box when implementing their 10 to 20-year vision. "Because of the staff's forward thinking, Visalia has entered the 21st century," he said.

Nelsen said he was also pleased with the city's great strides in handling the homeless issue. He said that the newly formed civic and faith group advisory committees have connected the homeless with the services they need. Often praising the department heads and city manager, Nelsen said, "We have made great moves forward. Overall, 2014 was a tremendous year."

Councilmember Bob Link played a major role in another long-term project that finally came to fruition last year, the General Plan. Link was the chair of the General Plan Update Committee, and after seven years of committee meetings and debate, the General Plan finally passed in November. Also on Link's list of top-five accomplishments are: building the city's reserves after the recession, balancing the budget, and voting to convert the city to by-district elections.

Councilmember Warren Gubler was most enthusiastic about the wastewater treatment plant that started construction last summer; a $140 million project which will recycle wastewater for use in parks and farmland. Considering the severe drought, Gubler feels the plant was the most effective decision the council made for 2014. When finished in 2017, the wastewater treatment plant will be the most expensive public works in the city's history. Next on his list of city accomplishments is a family favorite, the new pickle ball courts at Visalia Recreation Park. Gubler was also pleased with how the shopping cart ordinance succeeded in cleaning up North Visalia. The convention center's face lift and acquiring Seaport Airlines rounded out his top picks for 2014.

Goals for the Future

The goals for the next year were also viewed with an eye toward the next decade. The council discussed the future of COS, improving healthcare options for Visalians, a continued revitalization of the Northside/Oval area and ensuring that the city continues to implement the latest technology as its short-term goals. Ten-year goals include building a community/aquatics center on the south side of Visalia and a city hall/civic center on Oak Street, where all city services, including the fire and police departments, are in one building.

The civic center has been a longed-for and often-discussed goal that will most likely not come to fruition while any of the current councilmembers are at the dais. Plans have been drawn up but the price of construction has been prohibitive. A small step toward the civic center is in the works as funds for the Visalia Emergency Call Center, or VECC building, have been allocated. Construction should begin this year. Larger sections of the civic center will not happen until after the Animal Care Facility and the VECC building are paid off.

Councilmember Greg Collins' top 10 list of accomplishments for 2014

1. Continued focus on Oval area in regards to planning for revitalization.
2. SMART teams work in Washington and Oval neighborhoods.
3. Repaving of 100 miles of streets.
4. Build out of Visalia's trail and bike path system.
5. Paramedic works throughout the community.
6. Lack of significant gang violence.
7. Downtown continues to flourish.
8. Continued focus on East Visalia for new civic center.
9. Starting the process for the construction of new aquatic complex.
10. Restoring the Rainy Day Fund up to approximately $5 million.

Placing an Item on the Agenda

Next up for discussion was an issue that had been raised through the years by the city council on how to get an item on the agenda within the constraints of the Brown Act. Until now, the city manager has decided what would be on the agenda based on the business items that need to be discussed or voted on. City council members have put items on the agenda, but there exists no written policy on exactly how that should be done. The cities of Hanford and Clovis have no written policy concerning their agenda, but the cities of Bakersfield, Porterville and Tulare have set policies.

The Council discussed several options for agendizing items but did not choose a specific one. Staff will return to the council at a future meeting for a formal vote on a policy.

Four options were presented for consideration: First, to simply continue to follow the Brown Act. Under this process, a councilmember may add an item to a future agenda by describing it during the "items of interest" portion of a meeting. They would then need at least three votes in their favor to get the item added to the next meeting's agenda. Second would be to formalize the above into written policy. Thirdly, would allow a councilmember to add an item to the agenda by putting it into the consent calendar. And, fourth, a councilmember could get the consent of the mayor to have an item put on a future agenda.

Right now members of the public can request an item be put on the agenda during public comment. If it is not frivolous, the council will most likely vote to put it on the next agenda.

Sales Tax is a Declining Revenue Source for Cities Statewide

After the retreat participants' dinner break, Rene Nagel, city finance director, and Eric Frost, administrative services director, gave a presentation on sales tax trends in the state. Their presentation explained why sales tax is a declining source of city revenue and what other options were available. At present, the city depends on sales tax to provide 46% of its General Fund revenue. Olmos said that if city council was going to pin public safety to sales tax dollars it was going to get tougher to make it work.

Whereas internet shopping is the biggest culprit in declining sales tax revenue, Visalia also lost a portion of its tax base to other communities' shopping centers, he said. Since Tulare built its outlet mall and Hanford has a new Target and Walmart, those residents no longer drive into Visalia to go shopping.

Another reason for the decline in tax dollars is that residents are spending less on taxable goods. In 1980, 53 cents of every dollar was spent on a taxable good; now, only 33 cents of every dollar is spent on a taxable good. In 1930, there were three categories of nontaxable goods: gold, food and prescriptions. Currently, there are hundreds of nontaxable goods, including all items transferred to customers electronically. Just five years ago if someone wanted a book or CD, a resident would pay taxes on those items. Now consumers can just transfer the data electronically, no taxes paid.

Whereas sales tax revenues have increased since the recession, costs have increased faster. Maintaining and improving the infrastructure, and paying for all of the things the citizens of Visalia want, will be a challenge. But according to Mayor Nelsen, the biggest cost facing all cities right now are employee pensions and healthcare.

Because running the city is costing more than what the city is collecting in taxes, councilmembers need to get creative. Possibilities include putting a bond measure on the ballot, or raising the utilities, sales or parcel taxes, which would also have to go on the ballot. Councilmember Link warned that the council has to start looking for other sources of income now. Those other sources cannot be thrown together in six months. He said, it takes time and if the city wants to get a new tax or bond on the ballot it must start working now. He added that it was easy to pass Measure T because public safety is always the community's highest concern. But trying to pass a measure to pay for city maintenance or an aquatics center isn't as exciting and can be a challenge.

"We need to look at our options right now as the council in 2018 may look quite different and may not agree," he said.

Another fly in the ointment is that the city isn't the only entity that needs money. COS, the Visalia Unified School District and Kaweah Delta Hospital can all put competing bonds on the 2016 and 2018 ballot, leaving it less likely that a city bond would pass.

Briefly...

Excellence in Food Safety Awards Names Winning Facilities

Tulare County restaurants, cafeterias and markets with the highest food inspection ratings were recognized on January 27 at the Tulare County Board of Supervisors meeting with the Excellence in Food Safety Awards, and residents can access the list of those top-performing restaurants.

Retailers who received an award will receive a certificate and window ribbon cling to display at their facility. Residents can find out which facilities received an award by checking the list at www.tchhsa.org/foodsafety.

"Environmental Health places the utmost importance on recognizing restaurants that practice consistency in safe food handling and receive high marks on inspections," said Nilsa Gonzalez, Division Manager of Tulare County HHSA Environmental Health. "These restaurateurs have achieved a level of safety that we admire and hope others will emulate."

Tulare County Environmental Health Services implemented the Excellence in Food Safety Awards Program in March of 2010 to recognize restaurants that have consistent safe food handling practices and achieve a score of 95% or above on three consecutive routine inspections. The award places a spotlight on those restaurants that demonstrate outstanding performance in, and an exceptional commitment to, safe food handling.

What Should Visalia City Council Districts Look Like? Help Draw the Boundaries!

Visalia City Council members will be elected by district beginning in 2016. What should the districts look like? Where should the five district boundaries be? The city would like your ideas, input and help to draw the boundaries.

Citizens have responded to the city's request for their suggested district boundary maps. Currently, a dozen maps have been submitted and are on display on the city's website, www.visalia.city, for citizens to review. All maps will be on display at each meeting for citizens to view and provide comment.

The City Council's goal is to adopt the district boundaries by June, 2015 to ensure there is ample time for the citizens and any potential City Council candidates to understand the districts prior to the election cycle in 2016.

To learn more about the meetings or the district election process, contact Community Relations Manager Nancy Loliva at 713-4535 or go to www.visalia.city.

Orthopaedic Associates Expands Staff

Orthopaedic Associates, which recently relocated to 820 S. Akers, has expanded its staff to include physician assistant Scott Wasem, PA-C.

Wasem is a graduate of College of the Sequoias, California State University, Fresno, and the certified physician assistant program of the UC Davis School of Medicine. Prior to joining Orthopaedic Associates, Wasem served as a physician assistant with Fresno Community Emergency Medical Group, Central California Faculty Medical Group and Kaiser Permanente.

He brings 15 years of experience as a certified physician assistant to support patients and board-certified surgeons Bruce Le, DO, Burton Redd, MD, Don Schengel, MD, and Ian Duncan, MD, who specialize in arthroscopic surgery, total joint replacement and sports medicine.

The practice is now located in the Sequoia Medical Center at 820 S. Akers, Suite 220, near Sequoia Surgery Center and Kaweah Delta Rehabilitation Hospital. For information, call 733-3346 or 625-0551.

NOTICE OF VACANCIES City of Hanford Commissions

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, pursuant to California Government Code 54974 that an unscheduled vacancy exists for the following:

Tree Commission – Term expires December 31, 2015. Applications for the vacancy are currently being accepted.

Duties and responsibilities include providing recommendations on all matters pertaining to planting, care, removal and establishment of approved types of trees and shrubbery to be used on city streets, alleys, and city owned property. Meetings are on the fourth Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

Parking & Traffic Commission – Term expires December 31, 2015. Applications for the vacancy are currently being accepted.

Duties and responsibilities include investigating ways and means of improving parking and traffic movements and make appropriate recommendations. Meetings are on the fourth Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

Applications can be obtained at the City Clerk's Office at 319 N. Douty Street and should be returned by Friday, February 27.

PC Announces 2015 Hall of Fame Inductees

Porterville College proudly announces the inductees for its fifth annual Porterville College Foundation Hall of Fame Induction Banquet to be held on March 7 at the River Island Country Club in Porterville.

The 2015 Distinguished Alumni is Dr. Robert Aguilar. The 2015 Athletic Hall of Fame recipient is Kasey Nichols. Congratulations to all inductees and their families. The event's featured speaker will be California State University, Bakersfield President Dr. Horace Mitchell.

The Alumni Hall of Fame award recognizes former Porterville College students who have made outstanding contributions to both their professions and their communities; these alumni embody the highest standards of excellence. Induction into the Alumni Hall of Fame is the highest honor given to alumni by the Porterville College Foundation.

Social hour is at 5:30pm and dinner will be served at 6:30pm. Tickets are $50 each, $275 for a table of six, and $350 for a table of eight. Seating is limited and will sell out fast. Get your tickets today by calling the Foundation Office at 791-2319, from any PC Foundation Board member, or by calling 784-5300

Big Changes At Family Farm Fresh

Driven by member input, Ivanhoe's Family Farm Fresh will be implementing a new plan starting immediately by making three big changes. Family Farm Fresh is a division of McKellar Family Farms and has been delivering baskets of fresh, local produce directly to homes since 2007. First, they are dropping their membership fee and delivery fees. Second, all of the fruits, vegetables, and herbs will be organic. And third, the produce will be picked, packed, and delivered all in the same day.

"Everything is going to change, and the customer experience is going to better than ever," Bob McKellar, owner of Family Farm Fresh said.

Weekly home and office deliveries of baskets filled with local, fresh produce will continue as usual. Additional items like Rosa Brothers milk, Bravo Farms cheese, free-range eggs and olive oil can still be added to baskets. Customers can still substitute or add on local products that are not organic, but the basic contents of the baskets will start with organic produce grown by KMK Farms in Kingsburg. They have been providing produce for the baskets since the beginning and have expanded from less than two acres to 80 acres. They grow almost 300 varieties of produce year round and will pick and pack FFF customer's orders for same day delivery.

"My mission is to provide the freshest, best tasting, local produce that is in season in the Central San Joaquin Valley," McKellar said. "We deliver what is grown locally so that way we can ensure it is fresh and hasn't been on a long truck ride or sitting in cold storage."

Family Farm Fresh is a community-supported agricultural company. It depends on residents of the local communities who support its farms by buying local. Members are encouraged to visit the farm during special movie nights, farm socials, tours, and U-Pick events where the entire family can come out to the farm and pick their own oranges and mandarins.

"Members are like family to us," McKellar said.

WHCCD Board of Trustees Approves Personnel Changes

The Board of Trustees for West Hills Community College District approved three personnel changes this month, including the appointment of a new director for the child development centers and a new interim director of health careers.

Conne Cleveland started working for the district in 2001 as a teacher for the child development center at West Hills College Coalinga. She was most recently the site supervisor in Coalinga. Cleveland was promoted to director earlier this month. She earned her associate's degree in child development from WHCC, her bachelor's in child development from CSU Fresno and 30 semester units in curriculum and education major requirements from Fresno Pacific University.

Kathryn De Fede is the new interim district director of health careers. De Fede has a longtime career in nursing education for the California State University system and Associate Degree level nursing programs. She will assume the role in place of Charles Freeman, who recently retired. She has also been approved as the director of nursing at West Hills College Lemoore. De Fede earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from CSU Bakersfield and her Master of Science in Nursing Administration from CSU Dominguez Hills.

Oscar Villarreal is the new director of Upward Bound/After School Programs at WHCL. He was formerly the Upward Bound math and science program coordinator. Villarreal has worked for the district since he was first hired as a tutorial specialist for WHCC Upward Bound in 2000. He earned his Associate of Arts degree from WHCC. Through the Employee Scholars Program, he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Fresno Pacific University and a Master of Arts Degree in Educational Leadership and Administration from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

City Launches New Website at Visalia.City

The City of Visalia has launched a newly designed website with user-friendly features that is designed to customize the site to visitors' own unique needs.

"The City's website now features up-to-date technology that accommodates the site on a multitude of mediums with a responsive layout, and enables visitors to customize their own options," said Community Relations Manager Nancy Loliva. "The new site has a new address at Visalia.city."

Custom features include:

- 'My Visalia' resident portal allowing residents and visitors to personalize the website to deliver only the information they want – while keeping everything else just a few clicks away. Creating a user identity enables users to view, select and customize home page options including: news feeds; calendar events; favorite pages and City services; email subscription lists and service request through CivicaAssist's Visalia Works.
- Citizens increasingly demand better service from their governments. "Visalia Works" is designed to streamline the interaction between citizens, residents and local governments. With the web-based and mobile request and issue management system, citizens can easily submit requests for information, access trouble and violation reports online and, if they desire, receive email, phone or mail acknowledgements and updates. The Mobile SmartPhone app for IOS/Android platforms is scheduled to roll out by mid-March. Loliva said the City's app, one of the newest software being produced by Civica, the website vendor, will feature not only service request functions, but news, events, maps, city contacts, My Visalia, and FAQ icons to access information literally in the palm of your hand.

The website redesign was more than a six-month process, and the design committee was made up of representatives from City departments. Design committee members are: Pamela Sing, Community Development; Heather Robertson, Fire; Bob Craine, Information Services; Allison Lambert, Parks & Recreation; Carina Mello, Police; Jana Ferguson, Public Works; and Mario Cifuentez, Transportation and General Services. All City Departments have designated content managers responsible for overseeing the content of their respective webpages.

Fraud

Continued from p. 1

she attempted to use an automated teller machine at a local branch and was told to contact a bank employee. When she reported the unauthorized charges to a teller, Blackwell was told the money would be replaced and a new card issued, a process that would take more than a week, she said.

"They acted like it was not a big deal," Blackwell said, adding that she has no idea how her account was exposed. "I don't know how they got it."

According to Public Information Officer Megan Rapozo of the Tulare County Sheriff's Department, in cases such as these the banks are considered the victim of the fraud. Sergeant Damon Maurice, public information officer for the Visalia Police Department, said that agency has not received any reports of bank accounts being accessed fraudulently, but urged those who may have been affected to file a police report to document the incident.

"If they think there's fraud, by all means file a report," he said.

EECU's website has been updated to include a warning about a recent phishing scam that involved its members receiving automated telephone calls with false reports their bank cards had been blocked and offering assistance. It is unknown if the phishing scam and the recent breaches of customer accounts are related. The notice urged anyone who had received such a call to hang up on the caller and contact EECU at (800) 538-3328.

EECU failed to return several calls to its corporate offices when asked for information about the breached accounts. The branch manager at EECU's Mooney Boulevard location in Visalia was unable to comment on the matter.

Jaleeza Aguirre, a resident of Lindsay, also experienced unauthorized withdrawals from her EECU account. Aguirre received a message from EECU security personnel while attending church on January 18. Three payments from her account were called into question, two for amounts less than $10, which Aguirre said the EECU representative believed were intended to see if the money could be accessed, and a third for $537.

Aguirre said she was told to destroy her bank card and visit an EECU branch to complete paperwork about the theft. She was unable to do so until after the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday weekend, and was then required to write a letter of explanation about the breach. Aguirre was advised she could be held responsible for the theft, depending on the outcome of EECU's investigation into the matter. She was also told the charges appear to have originated in Cambodia.

EECU, Aguirre said, promised the money would be replaced in her account by January 23; however, her account had not been credited by January 29. She was also told the credit union was updating its bank cards with security chips, and the process would cause a delay in issuing her a new card. At press time, she had not yet received a new card, and was told it should arrive around February 3.

The bank representative Aguirre spoke with told her there had been numerous breached accounts, she said.

"She (the EECU employee) said she had been seeing this a lot," Aguirre said.

Aguirre was advised to use cash, services like PayPal and credit cards to make purchases in the meantime. Online security experts advise further measures to protect against similar fraud, including changing passwords on sensitive accounts frequently, using different passwords for each account, erasing old emails with account numbers, keeping anti-virus software up to date and using security-encrypted websites with the HTTPS prefix when transferring sensitive personal or financial information.

Aguirre, however, was still concerned about the safety of her deposits, especially after learning that her sister-in-law, who does not bank at EECU, had also been the victim of a similar attack. Her concern prompted her to empty her account, leaving just enough funds to cover automatic withdrawals.

"I'm kind of scared still," she said.

Expo

Continued from p. 1

questions as: "Where are you staying? How long before or after the show will you spend here?" Brubaker added. "There is a huge opportunity here. We would like to be the go-to organization," to answer some of those questions.

Brubaker would like the local chamber to partner further with the show and attendees in the future, so that Tulare can help them and keep business local, rather than further up or down the Valley.

It does take some 1,000 to 1,200 volunteers along with regular employees to put on the show, as well as all the local community does and has to offer.

"People sometimes ask what we do the rest of the year," said Fred Foster, CFO of the International Agri-Center.

It takes a year to organize each upcoming show with a lot of paperwork, and ground work, he said.

> *"Agriculture is the engine of this county and the Central Valley, and most any job here is related to it in some way."*
>
> Tulare County Supervisor Pete Vander Poel III

And with a waiting list of potential exhibitors, "we start selling for next year's show at this year's show," Foster said.

The Agri-Center was the concept of the 1976 Annual California Farm Equipment Show board of directors which, with others in the local community, formed a corporation to build an international agribusiness showplace in or near Tulare. It was opened at the 15th Annual California Farm Equipment Show and International Exposition, specifically aimed at producing that show and other agricultural events. It now does just that and more.

Much of the year sees bookings for weddings, award dinners, horse shows and sales, and other functions including its second largest event, the California Antique Farm Show in April. It also is home of the AgVentures Learning Center and is host to a fall Harvest Festival.

The World Ag Expo, which was given its current name in 2001, runs Tuesday, February 10 – Thursday, February 12 and is open to the public. Tickets are $15 at the gate. Various commuter buses will run from points in Tulare and Visalia to avoid traffic congestion on site. For more information, see the World Ag Expo website, www.worldagexpo.com.

HSR

Continued from p. 1

agenda item, the Cooperative Agreement with the HSR "provides the framework for the collaboration that will be required between Tulare County and the California High-Speed Rail Authority in the relocation of County facilities to accommodate the High-Speed Rail project."

The board ended up voting 5-0 to revisit signing the cooperative agreement after RMA and property owners were able to meet with HSR authorities and iron out their differences.

The Fresno-Bakersfield segment of the HSR, roughly 118 miles, includes a 23-mile stretch that transects the southwestern portion of Tulare County through Alpaugh and Tipton. The HSR railroad tracks generally parallel the BSNF Railway tracks, entering Tulare County southeast of Corcoran and exiting west of Road 80 heading toward Wasco. The HSR is predicted to add $100 million in value concerning improvements to county roads and making the BSNF rail crossings safer.

Supervisor Steve Worthley said, this is not about whether the supervisors support HSR.

"This is a vote on how we are going to move forward with the Authority," he said.

Supervisor Cox said, HSR is going to happen with or without the board of supervisors, "but we want to have a seat at the table."

Supervisor Vander Poel agreed that his opinion about HSR was irrelevant, but that he would be voting against signing the agreement until certain conditions were met. Vander Poel explained that HSR ran through his own District 2, and that potentially affected property owners have been given no clarity on what will happen to their businesses. He said they needed to know if their businesses will be preserved, accommodated, or taken through eminent domain.

Despite the fact that these property owners have had a hard time getting the attention of HSR, Tulare County has had quite a bit of say in the construction of the rail. Diana Gomez, Central Valley HSR regional director, HSR engineers and Tulare County staff met last year. Those conversations produced several concessions by HSR in terms of route, road closures and overpasses.

The accommodations made by HSR, however, did not mitigate the biggest problems faced by three business owners in the southwest corner of Tulare County. The railroad tracks cut too close or through a dairy, a pig farm and a pistachio orchard. Because the businesses are all in Vander Poel's district, he convened a meeting between the business owners, Gomez and HSR engineers.

On January 29, at the RMA conference room, the three business owners met with HSR authorities, RMA and Vander Poel. The meeting began with a review of the maps and evaluation of the road closures and overpasses. Avenues 136, 108 and 24 are slated to be closed; five overpasses are to be built each over Avenues 88, 112, 128, 120 and 56. To accommodate the frequent use of farm equipment, these overpasses will be wider than the normal 24 feet, to 32 feet.

Because supporters of the historic town of Allensworth vigorously protested the proximity of the rail to the fragile wood houses in the community, HSR is building what is called the Allensworth bypass. Allensworth was the first African-American town west of the Mississippi. Because of the new bypass, a segment of the rail will need to be elevated. Jennifer Hanson, owner of the pig farm next to Alpaugh, suggested that the HSR cancel two of the bypasses and use that money to extend the elevated portion of the rail by a mile. If the elevated rail is extended, it will pass over Greg TeVelde's mega dairy. Currently, the HSR track would eliminate his anabolic digester. But if the rail were elevated over his property, his digester could be saved.

TeVelde, who comes from an old Tulare County farming family, just built a multi-million dollar anabolic digester to handle all the manure produced by the dairy. TeVelde's dairy has 25,000 head of cattle, 10,000 of which are milked twice a day.

The two engineers did mention that it was unusual to have five overpasses so close together, especially in such a rural area. Gomez said the five overpasses were a concession to the Tulare County staff over a year ago, but Mike Spata, director of the RMA, said that there has since been a changing of the guard--and that if Tulare County agrees to drop the request for two of the five overpasses, then HSR should in return accommodate TeVelde's dairy. In addition, if HSR does eliminate the two overpasses, Eric Hansen's pistachio orchard will experience minimum damage. Through a previous HSR modification, Hanson's pig farm was saved.

Because of the environmental benefits of the anabolic digester, the state of California provided TeVelde grants to aid in the construction of the facility. In an ironic twist, the same California funds going toward the HSR would be used to tear the digester down, if the HSR cannot accommodate him.

A final item of discussion was a nine-mile stretch of rail with no overpasses. Everyone agreed that it was a sparsely populated, very rural section of the County. But if an emergency occurred, it might take up to 20 minutes for an ambulance to arrive from the closest hospital in Delano. Though a basically undeveloped area, there are, however, some orchards that are growing in size and a huge solar farm on Atwell Island that will be cut off by the tracks.

Gomez floated the idea of a three-season underpass, primarily to be used in emergencies. Only one has been approved in Madera County on a private farm. HSR would build the structure and then would hand it over to a private owner for them to maintain. Gomez also suggested that HSR pay to connect Avenue 40 to help mobility in the area in case of an emergency.

Gomez said that it would take the Authority two weeks to discuss the viability of the proposed changes to the tracks. A tentative meeting was set for the second week in February to discuss what the Authority will have decided. Vander Poel said that if HSR can accommodate the business owners in his district he will vote in favor of signing the Cooperative Agreement with it.

Viewpoint

Charlie Hebdo, terrorism, and the problem with rights talk

Laura Finley

I know this piece comes in the midst of great trauma and global challenges that are deeply emotionally charged. But I see great value in offering another perspective on the *Charlie Hebdo* publications and subsequent attack, as I feel as though to date the conversation has been entirely binary.

Either you are for free speech and support *Charlie Hebdo* or you are, in the U.S and the Western world, for terrorism. That is a false binary, and one that I believe contributes to the problem. I think there is a vast place between the two that can help us move toward a more peaceful coexistence with people who value freedom of speech and those who care deeply about freedom of religion. Although I do not agree 100 percent with what Pope Francis said about the issue, I do think his perspective has a lot to offer.

I agree that verbal provocation is no excuse for violence, as the Pope clearly said. But I also see how some like Polly Toynbee in *The Guardian* can argue that the Pope's comments were akin to a "wife beater defense." However, another way of looking at the issue is that the folks at Charlie Hebdo are little more than bullies. It is obvious that continual harassment about an issue on which people are terrifically sensitive will not be well-received.

In this case, the victims of the harassment are billions of people—it is all those who follow Islam's dictates that it is blasphemy to denigrate Allah or the Prophet Muhammad. This is what the Pope said…not that violence is justified, just that it shouldn't surprise us, either, as it was *intended* to incite and disrupt.

I am not saying we should never critique unfair policies or practices. In fact, we probably need to do even more of that without suffering repercussions, as is Saudi Arabian blogger Raif Bedawi, who has been lashed for his secular commentary. Satire and political cartoons can be an incredibly useful tool for raising awareness about various atrocities. But I have a hard time seeing how provocative images of who an estimated two billion people believe is their savior does anything to question policies, to shine a light on injustices, or to move the world in a better direction.

Poke fun at dictators? OK. Of politicians who make promises then repeatedly renege? OK. At pompous messengers of "religious doctrine" who themselves violate the very tenets they profess? OK. But of the actual deities, I feel less confident.

For instance, while I see the merit in satirizing the priests who allowed decades of abuse to be swept under the rug or the alleged followers of Islam who terrorize children in the name of their religion, I have a harder time seeing anything but bullying when it comes to attacking Jesus, God, Allah, Buddha, or other deities themselves. In the U.S, we pass laws prohibiting bullying. We train educators about it so that they can disrupt the behavior.

The White House has weighed in on the issue and issued reprimands to schools and universities who fail to disrupt bullying behavior. Yet here, when journalists pick and poke at the most holiest of holies, they couch their behavior in "rights language."

At least in the United States, journalistic enterprises have the "right" to poke fun at religious leaders and doctrine in the name of free speech. But I think what the Pope means is that perhaps we shouldn't be looking at this as a rights issue at all. Perhaps it is, quite simply, mean to do what *Charlie Hebdo* repeatedly does and that, instead of an even greater divide between adherents to Islam and those who defend free speech, we should be looking for ways in which people can come together.

Many scholars have argued that "rights talk" limits the dialogue or simply results in opposing sides trenching deeper into their positions. Harvard Law Professor and author of *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse*, Mary Ann Glendon argues that "A penchant for absolute formulations ("I have the right to do whatever I want with my property") promotes unrealistic expectations and ignores both social costs and the rights of others."

So, what next? I'd like to see an international dialogue that addresses the complexities of the issue, not just the surface opposition of freedom of speech versus freedom of religion. I'd like us to move to a place where we understand that, while we technically have the right to say or write something, we should exercise better judgment unless we can truly support the fact that our efforts will result in something better. I remain hopeful that others will view the issue similarly. I remain hopeful that, rather than dig deeper into their defenses, the many people with diverse perspectives on this issue will choose to consider another option.

Laura Finley, Ph.D., teaches in the Barry University Department of Sociology & Criminology and is syndicated by PeaceVoice.

How Prosecutors Think

Stuart Slavin, MD, MEd

Those in our lives whom we consider to be most objective, who in many ways are paid to be objective, have repeatedly been shown to be anything but objective. Rather, they make decisions that are consistently influenced by unconscious (implicit) bias.

White NBA referees call more fouls against black players than against white; MLB umpires are more likely to erroneously call a ball a strike if an all-star pitcher is on the mound; Israeli judges are more likely to grant parole at the beginning of the day than before lunch; doctors are less likely to provide adequate pain medication to patients of color and, because of bias, are prone to predictable errors in diagnostic reasoning.

Doctors' cognitive errors and biases have been well studied and chronicled, most notably by Jerome Groopman in his book "How Doctors Think." These include premature closure, latching on to a diagnosis too quickly; attributional bias, being unduly swayed toward a particular diagnosis because of a single patient attribute (age, race, gender) and ignoring evidence that points to alternative diagnoses; and confirmation bias (often accompanying premature closure) accepting evidence that supports one's diagnosis and discounting evidence that goes against it.

This topic is, or at least should be, a critical component of every medical student's education. I teach about it each year to medical students and a central theme that I emphasize is the need to recognize that unconscious biases are universal: that no one is immune; and that one needs to accept their existence, be aware of, rather than blind to, them. Deny them, ignore them, pretend they don't exist and the risk of errors in diagnostic reasoning is certain to rise.

As I followed the actions of the prosecuting attorney and the proceedings of the grand jury in the People of Missouri versus Darren Wilson case, I felt an eerie sense of familiarity with the risks, potential pitfalls, and resulting negative clinical outcomes that I teach about in class; I was watching a possible misdiagnosis unfold.

Soon after Michael Brown was killed, St. Louis County Prosecutor Robert McCulloch stated that he was not biased and if anything, he would be biased in favor of the victim. This, despite being the son of a police officer killed in the line of duty by an African American; this, despite more than 20 years working intimately with a mostly white police force; this, despite working during those same years to put mostly African American defendants behind bars. This despite having said about two unarmed black men killed in 2001 by DEA agents, "These guys were bums."

McCulloch took a tack early on in the proceedings, however, that could shield him from charges of bias. He wouldn't cherry-pick the evidence; he would show it all to the grand jury. How could that be biased? What McCulloch appears to have failed to recognize is that the way that evidence is put forward is susceptible to bias. One could argue that simply putting forward all of the witnesses (in this case 45) produced a situation in which greater inconsistencies between witnesses was virtually assured and the element of doubt, which would support a ruling of no true bill, would be raised.

McCulloch may have been swayed early in the case by attributional bias. Who was he to believe? Darren Wilson, a white police officer or Dorian Johnson, a dreadlocked African American who was with Michael Brown during a "strong-armed robbery" earlier that day, who had a criminal record and a history of lying to police? But McCulloch took another step to try to assure objectivity: he would place the foundation of his case on the "physical and scientific evidence."

In his announcement of the grand jury decision, McCulloch asserted that "physical evidence does not change because of public pressure or personal agendas, physical evidence does not look away when events unfold, nor does it block out or add to memory. Physical evidence remains constant and as such is a solid foundation on which cases are made." What McCulloch failed to recognize is that interpretation of physical evidence is not completely objective.

Several interpretations of the autopsy advanced in the media are completely false. The autopsy did not prove that there was a struggle for the gun, rather it simply showed that Michael Brown's hand was near the gun when he sustained the wound to his thumb. The autopsy did not prove, as some believe, that Brown could not have had his hands up with his palms facing Wilson. About the only thing that the autopsy could prove is that Wilson did not come up and shoot Brown in the back as he lay on the ground, as a few witnesses asserted.

So how does it appear that McCulloch used his false interpretation of the evidence? In his announcement of the decision, he stated, "witnesses were confronted with the inconsistencies and conflicts between their statements and the physical evidence. Some witnesses admitted they didn't see the shooting, or only saw part of the shooting, or only were repeating what they heard on the street. Some others adjusted parts of their statements to fit the facts. Others stood by their statements even though their statements were completely discredited by the physical evidence."

Sadly, the interpretation of key components of the physical evidence, the science that McCulloch stated was the foundation of his case was terribly flawed and was not actual fact.

Once McCulloch had the evidence he thought he needed to support Darren Wilson's narrative, it appears that confirmatory bias came into play. Witness 10, who was one of the few witnesses to claim that Michael Brown charged the officer, was subject to virtually no cross-examination even though he initially stated that he was 100 yards away from the shooting. For that matter, Darren Wilson himself received gentle treatment from the prosecutors.

Other witnesses whose narratives contradicted Wilson's were often subject to aggressive questioning. Witness 14, an apparent senior citizen who was concerned about those in the neighborhood "embellishing" and who stood within feet of the incident, provided detailed and compelling testimony that Brown had his hands up at his shoulders as he turned to face Wilson; that he was staggering, not charging; and was falling to the ground, clearly disabled, as Wilson unleashed the final fatal series of shots. This witness was repeatedly grilled about the details of his recollection. A detective was even brought in to question the conclusions that this witness had made.

McCulloch and his colleagues put together a case, a narrative, which appears to have been built on an illusory foundation. They appear to have been blind to the implicit bias that may have contributed to this. In medicine, this would have led to a misdiagnosis; in this case, it may have led to a miscarriage of justice.

Stuart Slavin, MD, MEd, is Associate Dean for Curriculum, Saint Louis University School of Medicine.

Columns & Letters

Online Comments
Comment at ourvalleyvoice.com or fb.me/ourvalleyvoice

County Should Follow Protocol

In response to: Tulare County Sued by Former Animal Control Employees

While it would appear this case is Blow Job-Gate, there is a connected case regarding a William Fabricius involved.

Grenseman was involved in testifying in that animal shelter case and he was definitely frightened with being called to testify. From a lawyer standpoint he was a possible risk to the county as he was wiggins out and might give up the fact that the county and recently charged Judge Saucedo directed a flagrant attack on Fabricius. Shortly after he was wiggling out in the sham hearings provided to Fabricius, Grenseman was fired. The entire Fabricius matter is well documented as the complete travesty that it is — county was paying the "judges" in that case and was caught doing it. I and several others witnessed that fake hearing process which is public record...Also, with regard to the third paragraph from the bottom as follows:

"It is still unknown why the county felt that Grenseman posed such a threat that he needed to be escorted off of county property, especially in light of the fact that, just two months prior, he was considered a model employee."

Well there's an explanation for why he was "such a threat". See post #18 at the following Topix blog:

http://www.topix.com/forum/city/visalia-ca/TQK1S7VE820FGC1FB

Quoted below, to whit:

"#18 Nov 26, 2013

How insidious can you get. The flagrant attack on Mr. Fabricius' ranch and subsequent attempts to cover it up with a fake judge just didn't work this time. This time in front of even more witnesses. What County Counsel and operatives at the superior court did to Mr. Fabricius through Animal Control was Stygian. Over twenty dogs murdered and puppies confiscated as "vicious". Really?

County Counsel and certain superior court judges are involved in targeting people outside their family law cases for Standing up to the case-fixing in Tulare County. Rather reminiscent of the Fox v. County of Tulare case, wouldn't you say?

(http://dockets.justia.com/docket/california/c…)

Then there's the Pierce v. Arreola case and mind-boggling examples of the court and County Counsel's manipulation there.

Tulare County Superior Court has already been described by a Harvard Law Professor as corrupt:

"The record of the trial court's negligence, legal incompetence and, indeed, blatant partiality… is simply shocking. There is strong evidence of the judge's ignorance of the law or the role of a court in family law actions. So serious was the miscarriage of justice that the judge sitting on the case was removed and replaced…. In a word, the case is a sad narrative of a wealthy spouse working with a corrupt court to simply gang up on the spouse and spend her out of court." (Bassett on California Community Property Law, 2012 ed., p. 1186-1187; emphasis added.)

How much more is it going to take before the public starts sitting up and realizing what's in front of everyone. Tulare County Superior Court, through County Counsel, is fixing cases before the court and attacking those who threaten to whistleblow on it.

Well County Counsel just got caught AGAIN. Manipulation in the Fox v. Rogers case, Fabricius v. Fabricius case, the Pierce v. Arreola case, and many, many others — the list just keeps on piling up.

Animal Control guy was so nervous outside that hearing he actually asked me if I needed to pee. He needed to pee and it was obvious. You guys are busted!"

Apparently the County was running some kind of fraudulent "Animals for Cash" "ROUNDUP" against William Fabricius, when certain of its Animal Control officers was panicking outside a subsequent hearing on that issue — had to get rid of him most likely.

Makes one wonder if the authority for the "roundup" was as ephemeral as what Wendy Jones discovered in her case.

http://www.ourvalleyvoice.com/2015/01/15/trouble-tulare-county-animal-control/

In my own assessment, Paul was likely fired to assist the County in covering up the fact that Tulare County Animal Shelter is in the habit of nabbing animals from folks without proper authority and for some kind of mill scheme.

Wendy Jones should contact William Fabricius of Ducor.

Ron Pierce

Black Tie

Alex Oldenbourg

Beth is amused by the existential implications of being a cartoon.

Veteran's Corner

VA Long-Term Care

Joe Wright

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers a spectrum of geriatric and extended care services to veterans enrolled in its health care system. More than 90 percent of VA's medical centers provide home- and community-based outpatient long-term care programs. This patient-focused approach supports the wishes of most patients to live at home in their own communities for as long as possible. In addition, veterans can receive inpatient long-term care through programs of VA or state veterans' homes.

Veterans can receive home-based primary care, contract home health care, adult day health care, homemaker and home health aide services, home respite care, home hospice care and community residential care. VA's nursing home programs include VA-operated nursing home care units, contract community nursing homes and state homes. The community nursing home program has the advantage of being offered in many local communities where veterans can receive care near their homes and families. VA contracts for the care of veterans in community nursing homes approved by VA. The state home program is based on a joint cost-sharing agreement between VA, the veteran and the state.

To be eligible for nursing home care, the veteran must have a service-connected disability rating of at least 70 percent, or be rated 60 percent service-connected and be unemployable or have an official rating of "permanently and totally disabled." Nonservice-connected veterans and those officially referred to as "zero percent, noncompensable, service-connected" veterans who require nursing home care for any nonservice-connected disability and who meet income and asset criteria may also be eligible. If space and resources are available, other veterans on a case-by-case basis may also be eligible.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues Veteran ID cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd., Hanford, CA 93230; call 852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.

Mooney Grove Plan Ineffective

This "plan" of Mary Bryant is not feasible or cost effective. She has been offered to help the park secure a bench and she refused and said "she could get a better price at Home Depot". Sorry Mary – if you can't help the county purchase a small bench for the park – how do you expect to raise hundreds-of-thousands of dollars to do all the grand repairs you have planned? You appear to be running a scam and it's only time before the law enforcement authorities catch up with you for fraud. Your plans are illogical and will not work. You will be investigated to see how your 501C is set up, who your board of directors are and where your money is going to. Non-profit organizations are easy to review.

As a Mooney heir – I refuse to sit back and watch a scam be perpetrated and innocent people lose their hard earned money to you. I will be talking to you soon.

Hugh W. Baca – Grand-nephew of Hugh Mooney

Banning Marijuana is Senseless

In response to: Tulare County Supervisors Vote to Ban Marijuana

Yah I would like some info on how to ban something that the majority of Californians voted for.

Lets ban peoples rights to medical marijuana.

That way my wife can get off medical cannabis and get back onto Fentynel and Oxycodone to treat her illness and get addicted to prescription drugs again.

In fact lets just ban Freedon all together. Lets ban those criminals working the vinyards making alchohol.

Lets just ban the right to vote, that way California wont make marijuana totally legal soon.

And just for the record I want to ban partying and drinking on spring break, rap music, and overweight women.

I mean who do people think they are to choose something I don't agree with huh ?

John Cail

Tule River Justice Center: 80 Years in the Making

Dave Adalian

Homegrown justice has been a long time coming to the Tule River Reservation east of Porterville.

In 1936, the U.S. government ratified a constitution and set of bylaws passed by Tule River Tribe members the previous year. In those new ruling documents, the Tribe gave itself the right to establish its own police and court system--and now, almost 80 years later, that vision is a significant step closer to being reality.

In a dedication ceremony held in mid-November, the new Tule River Justice Center--a 45,000-square-foot, two-story facility in the heart of the reservation--was officially opened for business.

"We've built for now and into the future," said Dave Nenna, project manager for the tribe.

So far, the center has become home to several established tribal institutions, including the tribe's administration, the tribal police force, its planning department and its youth outreach program, as well as providing courtesy offices for the California Highway Patrol and the Tulare County Sheriff's Office. But, perhaps the most significant space in the building--two new courtrooms--remain unoccupied. That will soon change.

"We're putting together a court structure, which is going to take some time," Nenna said. "It's intentional. We want to do it slow and do it right."

The first step in the process will be hiring an administrator to establish the new court's day-to-day procedures, a process that could take a year or more to complete once the right person for that job is found. Also still to be decided, Nenna said, was what kinds of cases will be adjudicated in the tribe's two new courtrooms and whether other local tribes' members will participate. Nenna estimates it will take three to five years for the new justice system, which will be overseen by federal judges, to reach full speed.

The new courts will hear civil cases only, with criminal cases remaining in the state system, and all cases dealing with the tribe's casino will be heard elsewhere, as required by current law. The center includes two courtrooms: a small space for mediation, and a larger one equipped for jury trials.

The grand opening of the Tule River Justice Center. Photo courtesy Tule River Tribal Council.

The long delay between the ratification of the tribe's governing documents allowing the establishment of a court system in 1936 and the recent construction was due to funding, Nenna said.

"We've never had the financial means to do that," he said.

Construction of the center was budgeted at just over $16 million, and the actual cost should come in several tens of thousands of dollars less than that. The final number is still being tallied as the budget is closed out, Nenna said, adding that greater savings could have been achieved, but the use of federal funds required hiring workers at the federal prevailing wage.

The majority of the funding for the project was provided by the Tule River Tribal Council, and was augmented by a $3 million grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, an arm of the U.S. Department of Justice, which was funded by the American Recovery Act. It was that grant that ultimately shaped the time line for construction.

"We were mandated to get it completed by September 30," Nenna said.

Design and construction of the facility was handled by Clark/Sullivan Construction, which received high praise from Nenna for their handling of the job.

"I've never worked with a more professional, competent company," he said.

Esthetically, the center's designers went out of their way to make the center match its surroundings.

"We tried to make it fit with the reservation," Nenna said. Located across the Tule River from the Tribal Council Building, the center features a slanted glass facade and integrates itself into the surroundings with stone pillars and a craftsman-style look.

The building doesn't just sport a modern look: It also boasts state-of-the-art technology. The construction met or exceeded the 2009 building standards of the International Code Council, and the building is equipped to handle the heavy data and IT requirements of its tenants well into the future. It also features security systems necessary for the running of a 21st-century federal court, as well as easy-to-operate touch-screen controls for its systems.

When it does begin operations, the new court system will handle issues such as child custody decisions, employee issues and land dispute settlements. This will move responsibility for such decisions into the hands of the judges and out of those of the Tribal Council, giving it more time to address other administrative issues.

"Right now, the Tribal Council is the judge and jury," Nenna said.

Since procedures have yet to be established for the new Tule River Reservation court system, no date has been set for its first day of business. Meanwhile, there are still some minor construction details being addressed, and final construction budget crunching is still ongoing.

"We're wrapping things up," Nenna said.

Willitts Pump
Celebrating 70yrs Serving the Valley
APEP IV Pump Test Certified · 750HP Well Developing Capacity · Service & Repair On All Makes & Models
Danfoss Flomatic Corporation
GOULDS PUMPS
ITT
594-5020
Willitts Pump
& INDUSTRIAL ELECTRICAL SERVICE
A DIVISION OF WILLITTS EQUIPMENT CO., INC.
30548 Rd. 196 P.O. Box 1110 Exeter, CA 93221
559~594~5020
Lic №671312

VALLEY VOICE
Valley Scene

Arts Consortium Receives City Grant

Catherine Doe

The Visalia City Council voted to award the Arts Consortium $36,000 to continue to implement the city's Cultural Plan. The Arts Consortium is the official art council of Tulare County. Councilmember Amy Shuklian declared that it was small price to pay for what the consortium does.

The Visalia City Council has appropriated money for the Arts Consortium since 2008. The goal back then was for the consortium to bring together sometimes competing art groups to produce professional-style art events and activities in Visalia. Shuklian thanked the consortium for proving to the rest of California that Visalia "isn't just some Podunk town in the Valley but that we offer arts and culture."

The Arts Consortium has made significant progress since the city first contracted with them. It has grown from a fledgling group with a handful of members, and a budget of a few thousand dollars, to a dynamic organization with more than 70 members. Currently, the consortium is comprised of both arts organizations and practicing artists and has a budget of over $240,000.

ARTS CONSORTIUM continued on **21 »**

"Carnavalle," Venice by Tom Howell

A Career in Art

Staff Reports

"A Career in Art" encompasses Tom Howell's work over a span of 40 years, starting with a Bachelor's Degree in Art from the California State University, Fresno in 1967 through retirement as a full-time teacher of art at Porterville College in 2003, and right up to the present as a part-time teacher in the art department.

Having grown up in Lancaster, California, Howell was a "desert rat," riding his motorcycle through the sage brush, developing a sense of landscape. He attended Antelope Valley College earning an AA in 1965. He then achieved his BA in Art, before his career was interrupted by two years (1969-70) in Vietnam as an "Advisor to Regional and Popular Forces."

In 1972, Howell earned an MA with an emphasis in drawing at California State, Fresno. This was followed by a year in Italy, studying art at the University of Florence. Upon his return to the Valley, he was hired as an art instructor at Porterville College, where he remained until retirement in 2003.

Howell developed skills in all aspects of the classes he taught at Porterville College including figure drawing, art fundamentals, sculpture, air brush, photography and computer graphics. He also taught all sections of Western art history. He designed the current art building interior, the photo lab, and the PC art gallery.

Throughout his career, Howell kept thousands of students on the edge of their seats, entranced by his extensive collection of art slides from his year in Florence and many summer abroad programs. Students would howl with laughter as he curled on his back at the front of the lecture hall, demonstrating ancient rock painting techniques of early man. His classes were known as the hardest as well as the most entertaining on the Porterville College Campus.

Upon retirement, Howell began his website, slatemountainstudio.com, giving a dramatic overview of his work and more recent devotion to computer graphics. In 2011, he returned to Porterville College for part time teaching of basic drawing and art studio fundamentals.

Howell's collected works at the Lindsay Museum/Gallery, located at 165 North Gale Hill Avenue, reflect the wide array of subjects and talents for which he has become known. Many of his students have gone on to become teachers of art as well as professional artists in drawing, painting and photography.

The Lindsay Museum/Gallery will display Howell's art between February 7 and April 19, with a reception on February 7 lasting from 2-4pm. Exhibit hours are Friday and Saturday, noon to 4pm.

A visit to this show will be an education in itself.

Jenn Ghetto

S Plays the Cellar Door February 6

Staff Reports

Flying Tigers will open for S (featuring Jenn Ghetto) who will play a Friday night show at the Cellar Door, located at 101 West Main Street in Visalia.

Legendary Seattle indie-rock band Carissa's Wierd was extremely influential in the NorCal scene a decade ago. Like most influential bands that feature multiple talented songwriters, the group split to pursue individual music projects. Parts of Carissa's Wierd became Father John Misty , Band of Horses, Grand Archives, and Jenn Ghettos' group simply called S. After getting her band together, Death Cab For Cutie's Chris Walla produced the band's record. The band is currently touring in support of their Hardly At Records release "Cool Choices".

Listen: https://www.facebook.com/jennghetto

Flying Tigers are poised to kick off the night. The group is a guitar and drum duo made up of Visalia natives Ron Stephens and Joe Miller who now reside in Santa Cruz. Their new musical project has not yet recorded, but they seasoned duo have played in many past Visalia bands such as Ranch 51 and Lunchbox.

Tickets are $5 for the 9:30pm 21+ show.

Song Duo to Perform at Spiritual Awareness Center

Donna Orozco

Award-winning singer/songwriter and innovative guitarist Erika Luckett and soulful jazz vocalist Lisa Ferraro will be the guest speakers and musicians at the Spiritual Awareness Center on Sunday, February 8, and will present a workshop that afternoon.

The community is invited to attend the free Sunday service at 10:30am at 117 S. Locust, Visalia. Their workshop, following at 1pm, costs $35 to attend.

Erika Luckett, left, and Lisa Ferraro

Entitled "Self Mastery through Creativity," the session is designed to help people open to their full potential and develop positive habits for creativity.

Together, these two artists have forged a sound that has ignited and uplifted audiences around the world. In Istanbul, they were joined by Turkish musicians in the recording of a contemporary collection of songs inspired by the poetry of 13th century mystic poet, Jelaladin Rumi. At the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions in Melbourne, Australia, they premiered a Rumi -inspired song which later became the theme for many in attendance.

Born in Mexico, Luckett began exploring songwriting and music in a unique childhood that zigzagged across the Venezuela countryside and Brazilian rainforests. Her smoky voice pulls in listeners with her intelligent, heartfelt lyrics.

Ferraro's remarkable vocal ability stretches from pop to jazz. Also a gifted songwriter, she debuted some of her songs at Heinz Hall in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania with Marvin Hamlisch. She has also sung and recorded with jazz legend Hendrick Merkins, Roger Humphries and jazz pianist Julie Bonk.

For information, contact the Spiritual Awareness Center at 625-2441 or go to www.spiritualawarenesscenter.com.

Patrick Contreras

Patrick Contreras Band to Play Cellar Door

Staff Reports

The Patrick Contreras Band will play Visalia's Cellar Door on February 13.

Born and raised in Fresno--and one of violin's fastest-rising stars--Patrick Contreras has woven Hip Hop, Mariachi, Rock, Soul, Jazz, Electronic and Classical music into a completely unique sound, thrilling audiences wherever he goes with his original music and explosive interpretations of Jimi Hendrix.

"Don't wanna just play the violin," Contreras has said. He's "here to reinvent it."

The violin has taken Contreras all across the United States, from Las Vegas and San Antonio to Los Angeles, Phoenix and, most recently, to Denver. Internationally, he has performed in Italy (Florence, Rome, Venice), Austria (Salzburg and Weis) and the Czech Republic (Prague. His most recent trip abroad was to Bissau, the capitol of Guinea-Bissau.

Tickets are $8 for the 9:30pm 21+ show. This intimate Cellar Door show is the perfect pre-Valentine night out.

Visalia Chamber Announces New Trip

Staff Reports

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce announces a new trip for its 2015 lineup of tours. A slideshow presentation "Discover Athens & the Greek Isles" will be held on February 5 at the Visalia Chamber of Commerce office located at 220 N. Santa Fe St. from 12-1pm. During the presentation potential travelers will view pictures of tour destinations, and have the opportunity to talk to a tour representative. Information for this trip can be obtained at the Chamber office or by visiting www.visaliachamber.org.

"Discover Athens & the Greek Isles" is a 9-day trip from October 16-24, which includes 16 meals, first class hotel and cruise ship accommodations, a professional tour guide and roundtrip airfare from Fresno International Airport.

The tour begins with an overnight flight from Fresno to Athens, where the tour director will meet travelers at the airport and assist in getting them to their hotel, where there will be time to rest and relax while preparing to explore one of the most important civilizations of the ancient world. First on the list is an Athens city tour featuring Syntagma Square, the Parliament, the Temple of Zeus, The Parthenon and the Ancient Olympic Stadium. Travelers will have leisure time to explore the Plaka, the oldest part of the city and a huge outdoor market place.

Travelers will then embark on a four-night cruise through the Greek Isles beginning on the beautiful island of Mykonos, famous for its white-washed buildings and huge windmills. Next will be a journey to Kusadasi, Turkey, to visit the ancient city of Ephesus, before continung to Patmos, the island where St. John wrote Revelations. The third island on the itinerary is Rhodes, the largest of the Dodecanese Islands. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the city of Rhodes is a medieval walled city. On the last day of the cruise travelers will stop in Crete, home of the Palace of Knossos, the largest bronze-age archaeological site on the island.

Concluding the tour will be a visit to Santorini, Greece's most romanticized island, renowned for its white buildings and hilltop overlooking the Aegean Sea. Before catching a flight home travelers will tour the region of Argolis, land of Homer's Golden Mycenae, and take part in a traditional Greek Taverna farewell dinner.

This tour is presented by the Visalia Chamber's travel partner, Chamber Explorations. For more information on the Chamber travel program, contact Nicola Wissler at (559) 734-5876

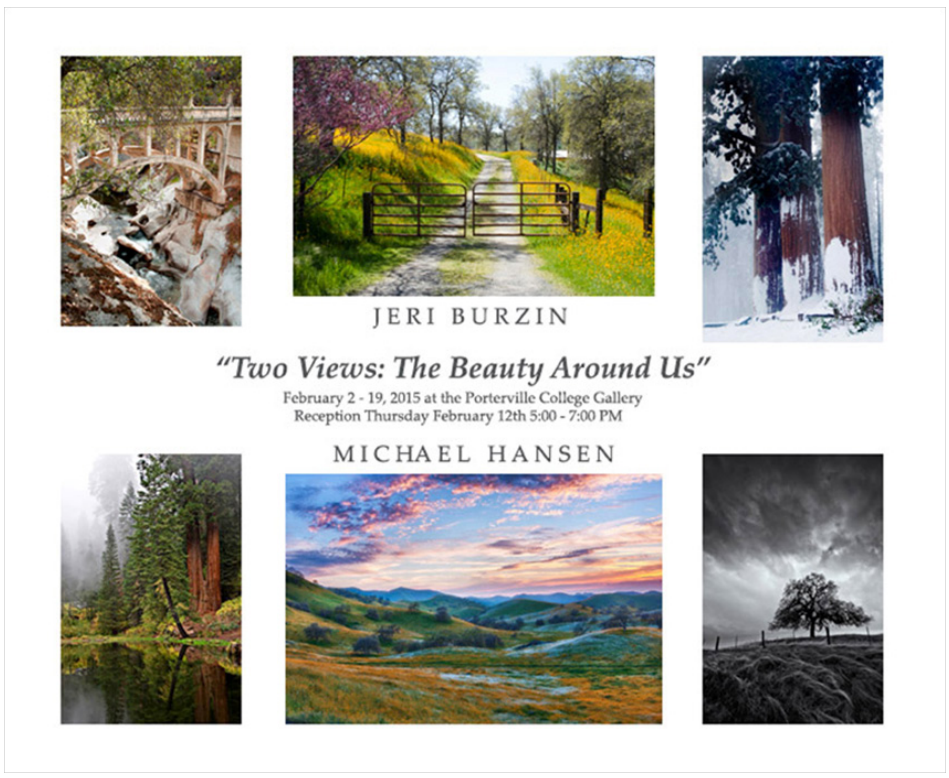
Symphony Goes to the Movies

Donna Orozco

Movie fans won't want to miss the Tulare County Symphony's "cloak and dagger" concert at 7:30pm on Saturday, February 21 at the Visalia Fox Theatre. Each year symphony music director Bruce Keisling includes a movie-themed concert in the season. This year's theme is all music from spy films.

The orchestra will play music from James Bond, Inspector Clouseau, the Pink Panther, Charade and even Charlie's Angels. But the most fun is always the commentary performed by Keisling himself. An avid movie buff, he introduces each piece with fun behind-the-scenes information about the film, composer and other tidbits.

Tickets are $30 to $39.50 at the symphony office, 208 W. Main Street, Suite D, Visalia, downstairs in Montgomery Square. Student prices are $10. Tickets are also available at 732-8600 or go to www.tularecountysymphony.com.


JERI BURZIN
"Two Views: The Beauty Around Us"
February 2 - 19, 2015 at the Porterville College Gallery
Reception Thursday February 12th 5:00 - 7:00 PM
MICHAEL HANSEN

PC Art Gallery Displays Burzin, Hansen Through February 19

Staff Reports

The public is invited to see the nature photography of Jeri Burzin and Michael Hansen in an exhibition at the Porterville College Art Gallery. The exhibit, which opened February 2, will run until the 19th. The public is also invited to a reception to meet the artists on Thursday evening, February 12, from 5-7 pm.

Sailing in the Caribbean in the early 90s sparked Burzin's interest in photography. Workshops in Yosemite and Sequoia National Park, and training through the CSU Summer Arts program increased her knowledge and passion for the art. "'Designs in Nature,'" she says, "are often the subject of my work and the desire to show how the commonplace may become the unusual continues to be a motivating force."

Burzin is a Board Certified Educational Therapist, and founder and director of Main Gallery, a group of artists who exhibit their work throughout the community. Her work is in many private collections and has been shown in numerous venues including the Ansel Adams Gallery and Yosemite Museum, Stellar Gallery, Fresno City Hall, Visalia Convention Center, Café 225, Arts Visalia, Exeter Courthouse Gallery, Kaweah Delta District Hospital, Central Valley Children's Hospital, and the Tulare Historical Museum.

Hansen's love for photography started in the late 70s, when he was introduced to backpacking. It was at that time he began documenting his trips into our wilderness areas. In 2003, he got serious about learning the craft and attended classes in basic through advanced photography at Porterville College. The foundations laid in the traditional darkroom with real film have helped him immensely with processing his digital images.

Hansen deeply enjoys these wild places he visits. "I can spend hours and days exploring the secret corners just off the beaten path," he says. "I love to wander with my camera, with no real plan or agenda, in my Jeep or on foot in the wilderness. I'm always amazed at the opportunities that present themselves, grand open vistas, moody fog, magical light, little details of the forest floor or the creatures that dwell there, nature moves me and it is my hope that somehow my photos convey this passion."

Hansen has shown in many venues around the valley and has many pieces on permanent display at the California 5th District Court of Appeal, Suncrest Bank, Kaweah Delta Hospital and Sierra View Hospital as well as many private collections. His work is represented by Getty Images and Acclaim Images Stock Photography.

Gallery hours are Monday through Thursday from 12 to 2pm and 4 to 6pm later the same afternoons. Parking is unrestricted during the time of the February 12 reception; for other times, contact the front desk when you arrive to see the show for a free temporary parking permit.

There is a new band on the scene, Band 'One 50', as witnessed by a full Plaza Park grandstand audience at the 75th Anniversary of Visalia's Parks and Recreation. Sponsored by Visalia Music School, the band--comprising Dan Michaels, Victoria Martinez, Ryan See, Krista Rodriquez, Louis Galvan and Adela Moreno--was chosen by Ramsey Ochoa, head administrator of the Recreation Department, to entertain the younger crowd with their many current songs.

Mavericks Coffee House Presents Jerry Hall and Trick Shot February 21

Staff Reports

Many performers request to play at Mavericks Coffee House; few, however, are actually invited. Mavericks has a long-time reputation of bringing only the best in western entertainment. Mavericks Coffee House will present Jerry Hall and Trick shot for the first time on February 21. For its 7pm show, the group will play western music in the tradition of the Sons of the Pioneers. They also will reach down deep into their saddle bags and play old-time country music.

Jerry Hall and Trick Shot

This is "music that can be enjoyed for all ages," says the Porterville Recorder, "and when they appear, you can bet there will be a crowd."

Jerry Hall and Trick Shot have performed at western music events in California, Wyoming, Arizona and Elko, Nevada. Having shared the stage with the likes of Baxter Black, RW Hampton, Waddie Mitchell, Jessie Smith, Chris Isaacs, Pat Richardson, Yvonne Hollenbeck, Virginia Bennett and the late Sunny Hancock, the band has opened for the Riders in the Sky, Pam Tillis, Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers, and played alongside Rex Allen, Jr., The Sons of the Pioneers and Sons of the San Joaquin.

With five albums to its credit, the group has over 20 live performance You Tube videos. It has served as the house band for the Rose Parade (2010), Los Angeles Equestfest (2011), and been featured on RFD TV. Jerry Hall and Trick shot were nominated for the Western Traditional Swing Band of the Year (2009) by the Western Music Association (WMA) and tied for the Top Harmony Trio for the WMA (2010).

Featured vocalist Jerry Hall is an authentic cowboy, having been raised on the Gill Cattle Ranch in Springville, California, and he still ropes and rides nearly every day following his retirement from the California Highway Patrol. Lead and harmony vocalist Ed Hughes trains horses on his ranch and is a retired educator from Lindsay. Randy Fowler is a long-time cowboy in training, and arranges most of the band's music. For many years he was with the Bakersfield musical group, Sundae Afternoon.

For tickets ($25 Visa/MC) stop by or call Mavericks at 559 624-1400. Doors open at 6 PM...open seating.

Lemon Cove Village: Update

Dirk Dole

I thought we would start the new year with an update from Lemon Cove Village, the county's first tiny house community. It is beautiful here in the foothills. We have been making steady progress on the renovation and improvements at the Village.

A tiny photo of a tiny house.

We have now finished the remodel on the baths and showers. We have just completed the coin-op laundry room and community building. We recently finished the road and site grading, including graveling the park roads and sites throughout. We are just about done on the dog park for our 4-legged friends.

We are waiting for the state to approve our application for the upgrade/replacement of the electrical pedestals.

Exciting news--we have our first Tiny House for sale in the park. This house is brand new construction. Price is in the $32,000 range. Builders can build to your plans or offer many to chose from. These homes are certified and inspected during the build process. This enables us to now offer financing on these tiny homes.

February 21 is our next OPEN HOUSE. We would like to invite all who are interested in seeing the Lemon Cove Village and the improvements we have made to stop by.

Juni Fisher

Wine and Chocolate with Juni Fisher

Staff Reports

Juni Fisher is coming to the Valley for a special Valentine's Day performance at the Lindsay Community Theater at 7:30pm.

She has played in Lindsay for the last two years, and the community is pleased to welcome her back.

Juni Fisher's name is synonymous with the kind of songwriting that, according to one promoter "Plumbs the depth of your soul…" She has won many music awards including Western Music Association's Entertainer of the Year, Female Performer of the Year, and Best Song in 2011 and 2014. But Fisher did not start out to make her living as a songwriter and singer. Her first love, and her greatest skill, is in riding horses.

Fisher grew up in a farming family in Strathmore, but between school and countless singing performances with her two sisters, she found a way to have horses, and 4-H and FFA honors followed her throughout her school years. While studying Equine Science at the College of the Sequoias in Visalia, she rode young horses and became known as a good horse show "catch rider." She rode her way through college, with top honors at Intercollegiate and Quarter Horse shows. Meanwhile, she was earning horse show entry money singing big band standards in a dance orchestra.

In her early adult years she apprenticed with a cow-horse trainer, and trained her own cow-horses from snaffle bitters to bridle horses, winning her first Snaffle Bit Futurity (IARCHA) in '81, and her first Bridle Horse Championship in '83 (the Monterey Classic) while working on a cow-calf operation and running a roping arena. Her bridle horses did day work on the ranch, and competed on weekends. If there was a campfire gathering with music, Fisher was there with her guitar, singing songs of the west, she had learned from her father. In 1984 she moved to Santa Ynez, CA, to work for a cutting-horse trainer, taking her blossoming songwriting skills with her.

A local band was quick to ask her to play rhythm guitar and sing leads and backups, and soon she was working L.A. area clubs with a country dance band, which was playing western and cowboy music. Fisher's ability to ride at speed across the hills found her a position as a foxhunting "first whipper in", and she served a one-year position with a hunt club in Tennessee. Point to point racing, steeple chasing, and horse trials took the place of cow-horses, while she honed her songwriting skills among Nashville's finest.

Her first Western release, "Tumbleweed Letters" (1999) reached Monterey Cowboy Poetry and Music Festival director Gary Brown in late 2003. He shared Fisher's music with other promoters and soon she would shift to music full time as her profession. Fisher now lives in Nashville, and performs at the major festivals and concert venues of all sizes across the US. For more on Fisher visit junifisher.net.

Tickets are only $20 and can be reserved at lindsaycommunitytheater.com. For more information on the show, call 284 2223. In celebration of Valentine's Day, the theatre will hold a special Wine and Chocolate pre-show party starting at 6:30 for only $10 more.

Sensation
Lingerie & Pipes
Valentine's Day Special
Take 10% off any one item*
Unique Gifts Body Jewelry Hookahs Diablo Supplies
Lingerie Artwork Vapes Novelties
Oils & Lotions Adult Toys E-liquids Gag Gifts
1930 W. Princeton, Visalia (559) 734-SEXY
1241 N. Ben Maadox , Visalia (559) 734-5048
* Not valid with any other offer or coupon; expires 2/28/15

AUTO OIL CHANGERS
10 Minute Lube Oil-N-Filter
10 Minute Lube Oil-N-Filter
We know 10 minutes means a lot!
LOCALLY OWNED AND OPPERATED SINCE
1985
OPEN
Mon.–Sat. 8–5
Now open Sundays 9–3
(at our Demaree Location only)
No Appointment needed
All work Guaranteed
$5.00 OFF
Full Service Oil Change
Oil, Lube & Filter Complete 10 Minute Service
EXPIRES: 3/31/15
223 E. Tulare Ave., Visalia • 1630 E. Main St., Visalia
3550 S. Demaree, Visalia • 1542 Tulare Ave., Tulare

Education

2015 Mock Trial Competition Began January 27

Staff Reports

The public is invited to watch 11 Tulare County high school teams compete in the annual Tulare County Mock Trial Competition. The Mock Trial teams are comprised of 10 to 20 students who take on the roles of lawyers, witnesses, court clerks and bailiffs.

All teams must make their presentations based on identical hypothetical case materials. Each team, coached by local attorneys and school personnel, presents the case for both the prosecution and defense twice during the course of the competition.

"The Mock Trial Competition is as exciting to watch as any courtroom drama," says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. "Our students do an incredible amount of preparation to understand the case law affecting their trial before taking on the roles of attorneys, witnesses and clerks. They do a masterful job of conducting themselves in court."

All teams will present their cases before actual judges and attorneys, with three attorneys scoring each trial. The first four rounds and the semi-final round will take place in the Tulare County Superior Court (third floor). Each is open to the public.

The teams which competed in the 2015 Tulare County Mock Trial Competition during late January and early February, represent Dinuba High School, El Diamante High School (Visalia), Exeter High School, Lindsay High School, Mission Oak High School (Tulare), Mt. Whitney High School (Visalia), Orosi High School, two teams from Redwood High School (Visalia), Tulare Union High School and Tulare Western High School.

For 2015, Mock Trial student participants throughout California will be preparing the fictitious case People v. Shem. The case involves the trial of Evan Shem, who is studying for a masters of fine arts degree at Hamiltonia University. Shem faces one felony count (theft by larceny) for the theft of Treason, a painting by Fletcher Yazoo. Treason is owned by wealthy art collector Marty McCulloch.

The prosecution alleges that Shem, McCulloch's intern, stole Treason during a Fourth of July party at McCulloch's mansion. During the festivities, Shem served as a docent in McCulloch's art gallery. The prosecution alleges that Shem, a talented artist with a knack for recreating famous works of art, stole the painting, replaced it with a fake and intended to sell the original to pay off substantial school debt.

Furthermore, there is eyewitness testimony that places Shem at the scene of the alleged theft with a backpack. Bernie Worcester, the prosecution's expert witness, will testify that a painting found during a search of Shem's apartment by Detective Barron is the original Treason.

The defense argues that Shem did not steal the painting. Shem is a dutiful intern who loves art and was thrilled at an opportunity to intern for McCulloch. Shem testifies to leaving the gallery unlocked while enjoying a fireworks display along with about 200 other guests at the party. The defense also argues that Shem's roommate, Charlie Gibbons, was overly interested in Treason, and an eyewitness places Gibbons near the gallery at the time it allegedly went missing. Furthermore, Jamie Sardegna, the defense's expert witness, testifies that the painting found at Shem's apartment was not painted by Fletcher Yazoo.

The Tulare County Office of Education would like to thank the many legal community volunteers who donate their time and expertise to make this competition possible.

"Mock Trial is an extremely valuable competition," says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. "We applaud the teachers and attorney-coaches for investing many hours in preparing their students for this event – giving them a glimpse into the workings of our judicial system."

The Mock Trial Program is sponsored by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, and co-sponsored by the California Department of Education, the State Bar of California, the Young Lawyers' Association and the Daily Journal Corporation. The Tulare County Office of Education coordinates the program locally, with assistance from local attorneys and judges.

The semi-finals will be held February 12, 5pm at the Tulare County Courthouse in Visalia.

The finals will be held February 19, 5-8pm at the El Diamante High School Theater in Visalia.

The champions from the final round of the Tulare County Mock Trial Competition will be eligible to compete in the annual state finals in Riverside, March 20-22.

CA.GOV STATE OF CALIFORNIA
CSSSA CALIFORNIA STATE SUMMER SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

State's Premiere Arts Summer School Accepting Applications

Staff Reports

The California State Summer School for the Arts (CSSSA) invites all talented and motivated high school students to apply for admission to the 2015 summer session held from July 11 - August 7, 2015.

Applications can be found online at csssa.ca.gov and are due on February 28, 2015. Last year CSSSA received 4 applications from Tulare County and one was admitted.

CSSSA is the only state-supported arts summer school on the West Coast. This creative, cutting-edge and immersive four-week residential program draws the most talented students to learn from a college-level faculty and professional working artists. Students have seven artistic disciplines to choose from, including: Animation, Creative Writing, Dance, Film & Video, Music, Theater and Visual Arts.

Held on the campus of the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia, approximately 500 students each year attend from around California and the globe. All students are selected by their submission of an application and work sample that is reviewed by a panel of educators and professional artists. It is only after the student is accepted into the program that financial need is considered. CSSSA's Foundation has made it possible for every young artist to attend, so no one is turned away due to financial hardship.

CSSSA has cultivated some of today's top artists including Alex Hirsch, creator of 2015 Annie Awards nominee "Gravity Falls," and Pendleton Ward, creator of 2015 Annie Awards nominee "Adventure

Time," both in the Best Animated TV/Broadcast Production for Children's Audience category. A few other notables who graduated from CSSSA include Zac Efron, Katharine McPhee and James Franco. Upon acceptance to CSSSA, each student is designated as a California Arts Scholar, the highest designation offered by the State of California for young artists.

RECYCLE IF YOU WANT —
THE SCIENTSTS SAY IT'S OVER

Sycamore Valley Academy Accepting Applications for 2015-2016

Staff Reports

Sycamore Valley Academy, an independent, K-8 charter school, is now accepting student applications for the 2015-16 school year. Chartered by the Visalia Unified School District, Sycamore Valley Academy (SVA) was authorized by Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) in 2012 and first opened its doors to students in August of that year.

SVA Principal Ruth Dutton is leading informational meetings and school tours on the SVA campus in February to inform the community of this unique educational option, which she describes as "good for kids, and good for the community."

Charter schools are tuition-free, public schools that have a unique focus or design. In the case of SVA, the school offers "accelerated academics in an enriching environment." Some of SVA's distinguishing features include an emphasis on differentiated learning objectives to keep all students continually challenged, thematic learning units, foreign language, hands-on science, service-learning, art and music instruction, social and emotional learning, multi-age classrooms, project-based learning, and gifted and talented programming.

The mission of SVA is to provide a rich, meaningful education in a nurturing environment, where students are continually challenged and their natural curiosity, creativity and talents can thrive. SVA is a collaborative community of educators and families working together to help our students grow into virtuous, courageous, and intelligent citizens, equipped with a love of learning and love of life, and eager to contribute to a better world.

Informational meetings and school tours were offered at SVA throughout January, and will conclude in February. Interested parents are encouraged to attend. The last informational meeting will be held between 6-7pm in the SVA cafeteria on February 17 (Spanish translation provided). A final school tour will be conducted on February 12 (Spanish translation provided on both dates) from 8-9:30am at the SVA campus. Space is limited on school tours, and those interested in attending a tour must call (559) 622-3236 to reserve a place.

More information about admissions, including the one-page student application and directions for submitting it by the February 18, 2015 deadline, can be found at the school website: www.sycamorevalleyacademy.org. For additional information, contact: Ruth Dutton at (559) 622-3236 or email at rdutton@sycamorevalleyacademy.org.

Porterville College will hold a presentation centering around Allensworth.

Porterville College CHAP Takes Closer Look at Allensworth

Staff Reports

The Porterville College's Cultural Historical Awareness Program (CHAP) will begin its spring schedule on February 18 with a special Black History Month presentation of "Allensworth: History and Personal Recollections" from 11:30am to 12:30pm in the Porterville College Theater. Allensworth, an African American community in southeastern Tulare County that was established in 1908, is known today as Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park.

Guests will include Josie Triplett, Child Development Professor (retired); Marianne Reliford, Allensworth State Park docent; and George Finley, former principal of Allensworth School. Triplett's mother was raised in Allensworth, and Finley was the school principal there for many years. Together, they will relate some of the history of this unique community, as well as their personal experiences there.

The event is open to the public and free to attend. Contact the front desk in the Academic Center building upon your arrival for a free temporary parking permit.

The campus is located at 100 East College Avenue in Porterville.

Look for more CHAP presentations throughout the spring. CHAP was organized in 2002 to enhance students' awareness of certain important aspects of our society to which they may previously have had little or no exposure.

A theme is chosen by CHAP members each school year, and faculty members across the campus are encouraged to integrate elements of that theme into their coursework.

Additionally, a variety of field trips, guest speakers, panel discussions and videos are presented throughout the year and are all open to the public. For more information about the program, call Richard Osborne at (559) 791-2298.

Tulare Astronomical Association's observatory. Photo courtesy Tulare Astronomical Association.

TAA Will Hold Basic Astronomy Class

Staff Reports

The Tulare Astronomical Association (TAA) will hold a class in Basic Astronomy. The class is geared toward the beginning and novice astronomer who wishes to gain a better understanding of the night sky. The class will include lectures on motions of the night sky, how the solar system was formed, evolution of the stars and galaxies and expansion of the universe.

On consecutive Wednesday nights, February 18 through March 25 (except for Wednesday March 4, which is reserved for the regular TAA meeting), the classes will be held from 7-9pm at the Arthur Pursell Observatory and Astrophysics Center (APO), 9242 Avenue 184 in Tulare. Parking is available on the observatory grounds. From SR99 north and south, take Avenue 184 exit (south of Tulare). Proceed west on Avenue 184 to the observatory (about 1/8 mile past Road 96). Look for APO OBSERVATORY sign at the entry to the site.

The class costs $50/person and, while free for existing TAA members, it must be booked on the TAA website at www.tulareastro.org if you plan to attend. Fees may be paid by check or cash at the first class meeting. A minimum of five paid participants are needed to go forward with the class.

This class is not tailored to young children, who, if attending, must be accompanied by an adult at all times. A sweater or jacket is recommended. White-light flashlights will not be allowed on the observing grounds during class.

Arts Consortium

Continued from p. 17

Before the city asked them to oversee their cultural plan, the Visalia Arts Consortium was already an established organization that coordinated communication amongst the various artists and arts organization in Visalia. The first grant seven years ago provided modest funding for staff support and a small office space.

In more recent years, the consortium has expanded its work program beyond Visalia to include the entire county, and has secured additional contracts. It has relocated to its own office, but the main goal is still to implement the city's Cultural Plan. The city funds will pay for a part- time executive director to plan the consortiums' five events and continue collaboration among the area's artists. Maintaining a community calendar of all the arts and cultural events happening in Tulare County is one of the director's duties and the goal is to have at least 1,500 items listed for 2015. The calendar can be accessed through their website, www.artsconsortium.org.

The most popular event put on by the consortium is Taste the Arts, which happens every fall in downtown Visalia. Mayor Steve Nelsen predicted that Taste the Arts will eventually be one more event that will make Visalia a destination city in terms of tourism and not just the gateway it is considered today.

According to the Arts Consortium website, "This annual event is a celebration of the rich cultural and artistic heritage of our community. The Central Valley is known for the diverse crops grown in our area. This diversity also attracts a broad spectrum of cultures to our region, each with its own distinctive arts and traditions. Taste the Arts celebrates this multi-cultural background with an event just as unique.

Taste the Arts offers a full-day of free activities for the community. Check out more than 70 regional visual artists and their paintings, sculptures, steel work, photographs, gourds, and jewelry. Enjoy entertainment on two packed stages featuring musical acts, dance troupes, and cultural performers. Participate in aerosol art and printmaking workshops, or showcase your creativity in the Farmers Market 'Fun with Food' sculpture contest. Take advantage of numerous youth activities and much, much more. ALL FOR FREE!"

Taste of the Arts happens on Garden Street between Main Street and School Avenue. This year's Taste the Arts is scheduled for Saturday, October 17, from 11am-5pm.

The first event of 2015 put on by the consortium will be the South Valley Artist Tour. This year's featured artist is Joy Collier, whose specialty is painting in acrylic.

The tour schedule is Friday, March 20, 5pm-8pm; Saturday, March 21, 10am-5pm, and Sunday, March 22, 10am-4pm. Tickets will go on sale during the Preview Exhibition at the Arts Consortium office on March 6, from 5:30pm-8:30pm at 400 N. Church Street in Visalia.

Over the course of these three days, numerous Tulare County artists from Dinuba to Springville and Three Rivers will open their personal studio doors to the public, demonstrating their individual creative processes and sharing different phases and facets of their work. The second biennial South Valley Artists' Studio Tour offers an exclusive behind-the-scenes look into the world of local artists.

This unique opportunity allows Tulare County artists to share their creative process and work environment with the public, fostering appreciation and understanding in our community. Self-guided backstage pass into the world of over 40 local professional artists is included in the ticket price. Ticket holders can ask questions, watch the artists in action, and potentially build a more personalized relationship with the creative forces in our community.

For more information about all the events put on by the Arts Consortium call 559-802-3266 or visit the website at artsconsortium.org.

Calendar

Through February 12: CORE Challenge, 12-12:45pm
Traci Dykstra will teach a class that focuses on the waistline, tightening the lower abdominals and strengthening the lower back. The $35 class meets Tuesdays and Thursdays at Anthony Community Center, Dance Studio. For information, visit liveandplayvisalia.com.

Through February 12: Intro to Boot Camp, 5:30-6:30am
Traci Dykstra and Carrie Fawkes will introduce participants to a high-energy workout interlaced with weights and resistance. The class is offered Tuesdays and Thursdays at Anthony Community Center Gym. To register, visit liveandplayvisalia.org.

Through February 17: Salsa Dance, 6:15-7:15pm
Jovita Metts and Juan Cuevas will teach salsa, the social dance that originated on the island of Cuba, at Anthony Community Center. Cost is $70 per couple of $40 per person. To register, visit liveandplayvisalia.org.

Through February 23: Morning Yoga, 7-8am
A yoga class will be offered at Whitendale Community Center in Visalia on Mondays. The cost is $35. Another class will also be offered on Thursdays. To register, visit liveandplayvisalia.org.

Through February 23: R.I.P.P.E.D., 9:30-10:30am
A high-intensity workout that combines Resistance, Interval, Power, Plyometrics, Endurance and Diet will be offered Mondays and Wednesdays at Anthony Community Center in Visalia. The cost is $35 and is open to all fitness levels. For information, visit liveandplayvisalia.com.

Through February 27: Water Conservation Contest
California Water invites teachers of grades 4-6 to create and implement a class project related to water for a chance to in an all-expense-paid trip to Channel Islands and other prizes. Teachers will have access to technical, expert and monetary support. For details, visit calwater.com/challenge.

Through February 27: Bold & Beautiful--The Art of Brenda Allison, 9am-3pm
Jon Ginsburg Gallery welcomes guest artist for January through February. The exhibit features oils, acrylics and watercolors. For information, call 733-9329.

Through February 28: Tulare County: Varied Impressions
Tulare City Historical Society will hold its annual Tulare County: Varied Impressions art exhibit in the Heritage Art Gallery, 444 W. Tulare Ave. A reception for the artists will be held from 5 to 7 pm Jan. 8. It is free. For information, call 686-2074.

Through March 14: 7th Annual Miniatures Works of Art
The Tulare City Historical Society will host this exhibition at the Tulare Historical Museum, 444 W. Tulare Ave., Tulare. The museum is open 10-4pm Thursday through Saturday.

Through March 15: Cabrillo Civic Club Scholarship Applications
Cabrillo Civic Clubs of California are now accepting scholarship applications from high school seniors who meet the following criteria: Portuguese descent, US citizenship or permanent residency, a GPA of 3.5 or higher. For more information contact Dulcie Nunes at 559-688-8070. Applications may also be submitted online by visiting www.cabrillocivicclubs.org/scholarship.

Through March: The Photography of Deborah Nolan
Photography 20"x30" by Deborah Nolan is on display at Sue Sa's Club House Deli located at 699 West Center Avenue, Visalia.

Through June: Visalia Branch Library Teen Homework Center, 3-6:30pm
The Visalia Branch Library offers a place for teens to do their homework Tuesdays through Fridays. The library is located at 200 W. Oak St.

Through June: Tulare Public Library Homework Help
Homework help for children in grades K-12 will be available in the Tulare Public Library Learning Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-7pm and Saturdays from 1-4pm.

February 3 to March 24: Teen Fiction Writers' Workshop, 4-5:30pm
Local author Janet Nichols Lynch will conduct a Tulare County Office of Education Workshop on Tuesdays at 7000 Doe Ave., Suite A, Visalia. Students, grades 7-12, may apply by submitting a short story or novel except, 500 to 3,000 words, to janetl@ersconnect.org. The deadline for submissions is Jan. 16.

February 5: Chamber Travel Slideshow, noon
Join the Visalia Chamber of Commerce for a Travel Slideshow Featuring Discover Athens & the Greek Isles. A Chamber-sponsored trip there will take place October 16 - 24, 2015 $3599+ per person (double occupancy) For more travel information contact Nicola Wissler at the Visalia Chamber Office: 559-734-5876 or nicola@visaliachamber.org

February 5: Groundbreaking, 3-4pm
Fire Station 53 will officially begin life at its 3pm groundbreaking at Atwood and Walnut Avenue. A brief program will be held followed by the commemorative "breaking of the ground." Light refreshments will be available

February 5: Community input meeting for VUSD boundaries, 6pm
Families will have the opportunity to learn about and offer input into proposed changes to attendance boundaries for Visalia Unified School District's middle and high schools. In the Green Acres, cafeteria/multi-purpose room.

February 5 to 7: Mary Poppins, the Musical
Based on the beloved books by P.L. Travers and music from the Disney Movie starring Julie Andrews, "Mary Poppins" will be performed by Redwood High School. For information, visit www.vusd.org.

February 6 to 21: Winnie the Pooh
The Enchanted Playhouse presents "Winnie and Assorted Friends." The play will be held on Friday and Saturday at 7pm, and Sunday at 2pm at Main Street Theatre, 307 E. Main, Visalia. For information, visit enchantedplayhouse.org.

February 6: T.J. Maxx Blood Drive, 11am-2pm
A Central California Blood Center drive will be held at T.J. Maxx, 3040 N. Dinuba Blvd., Visalia. Special rewards coupons will be given to all donors.

February 6: Women's 7 on 7 Soccer Registration Deadline
The deadline to register for the Visalia Spring Women's 7 on 7 Soccer League is Feb. 6. The league starts Feb. 15. To register visit liveandplayvisalia.com.

February 6: Richard Arenas shows 2 art series at Brandon-Mitchell Gallery, 5:30-8pm
Richard Arenas, one of the Valley's most well-known and prolific sculptors, will discuss his series of "Maneras de Cosechar Uva" (Steps to Picking Grapes) along with his "Day and Month Symbols" in the Brandon-Mitchell Gallery during the First Friday art exhibit on Feb. 6 at 6pm. The reception begins at 5:30pm.

February 6: Tulare-Kings Counties Mass Choir, 6pm
Tulare-Kings Counties Mass Choir presents its Silver Anniversary 25th Annual Gospel Music Concert and Gala at the Visalia Fox. Tickets, $15-25, are available at foxvisalia.org.

February 6: The Laws of Tithing Dinner, 7pm
Congregation Beit Shalom invites the entire community to a Tu B'Shevat Seder. During this ritual meal, there will be the tasting of specific fruits, nuts, and grains that are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as being from the land of milk and honey. Not only will there be four cups of wine or grape juice, as in the Passover Seder, there will also be a delicious kosher chicken dinner with the traditional Sabbath Challah Bread, home made by Len Epstein & Son Matthew. Traditionally, on this day, trees are planted. Please join in the Tree Planting Ceremony which will take place on our property one half hour before the start of the Sabbath & Tu B'Shevat Seder meal. Following the dinner, we will enjoy a film: TREE OF LIFE - Reflections on Torah and Environment (28 min.) by Monique Schwartz and Benzion Tidhar. Dinner $12 donation. RSVP: 308-1333 or congregationbeitshalom@yahoo.com

February 6-21: "Nunset Boulevard" 7:30pm
The Little Sisters of Hoboken are at it again—this time they've been invited to sing at the Hollywood Bowl. Comedy and music at Encore Theatre, 324 South N St., Tulare, at 7:30 p.m. Runs weekends through February 21. 559 686-1300 or www.tulareencoretheatre.org

February 6: S (featuring Jenn Ghetto) 9:30pm
Touring in support of their Hardly At Records release "Cool Choices" is S (featuring Jenn Ghetto) for a 21+ show at the Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St. in Visalia. Flying Tigers are poised to kick off the night. Tickets are $5.

February 7: Visalia Farmer's Market--Mooney Blvd., 8-11:30am
In the Sears parking lot. For information call 559-804-8372

February 7: Throwing Wise, 1-3pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District will host a sports camp on Saturday, February 7, to help student athletes and their parents learn how to prevent throwing injuries. The Throwing Wise Camp--for athletes aged 10-15--will take place from 1-3pm at Visalia Rawhide Stadium, 300 N. Giddings Street, is limited to the first 150 student athletes to register at www.kaweahdelta.org/throwingwise. Cost is $25 per athlete. Attendees will receive a free baseball and have it signed by Rawhide mascot and Holstein Bull par excellence, Tipper.

February 7: EUHS 10 Year Class Reunion, 6pm
The Exeter Union High School class of 2004 will be celebrating its 10-year reunion at the Stag Saloon. Festivities include dinner, drinks and music. Tickets, $20, available at brownpapertickets.com/event/885633.

February 7: Mary Immaculate Queen School Dinner, 6pm
A gourmet meal, entertainment, dancing and a diamond drawing will be featured at the MIQ school fundraiser. The event will be held at Harris Ranch Restaurant Grand Ballroom, 24505 W. Dorris Ave., Coalinga. Tickets, $200, are available at the school, 884 N. Lemoore Ave., or by calling 924-3424.

February 7: 38th Annual Crab Feed, 6pm
The Rotary Club of Hanford will hold its annual crab feed to raise money for its youth and scholarship programs. In addition to dinner, a '70s-theme dance will be held at Hanford Civic Auditorium. Tickets are $75. For information, visit facebook.com/RotaryClubHanford.

February 9: Great Conversations--Prometheus *Bound*, 4-5:30pm
A discussion of this Great Book by Aeschylus will take place on the COS main campus in Hospital Rock 133.

February 10-12: World Ag Expo, Tuesday & Wednesday, 9- 5pm; Thursday, 9am-4pm
Attendees from all over the world come to World Ag Expo, a production of International Agri-Center(IAC),at 4500 South Laspina Street in Tulare, to see the newest pieces of equipment and the latest innovations for their agricultural operations. Some of these attendees are students, and many local schools pre-schedule a day off so students may attend World Ag Expo to learn more about the area's ag industry. Admission is $15 at the gate; kids under 12 and under, free.

February 10: California Department of Education Conference, 8:45am
The California Department of Education, in partnership with the Tulare County Office of Education, will host a Central California conference entitled Launching the 2014 English Language Arts/English Language Development (ELA/ELD) Framework. For more information, call 651-3831.

February 11: Wellness & You: Heart Valve Disease, 5:30-6:30pm
Drs. Leheb Araim and Philip Faraci, cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon respectively, will give a presentation at the Kaweah Delta Multiservice Center, 402 W. Acequia Avenue in Visalia.

February 12: Sycamore Valley Academy Campus Tour, 8-9:30am
Satisfy your curiosity about the SVA campus. Spanish translation provided.

February 12: The Heart of Seniors Luncheon, 11am-2pm
Hands in the Community will hold The Heart of Seniors Luncheon at the Holiday Inn, Visalia. Open to caregivers, decision-makers and businesses supporting seniors. For information, visit hnconline.org.

February 12: Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, 4pm
At 3332 S. Mooney Blvd., Blending Palettes Visalia is the newest venue for art entertainment and art instruction located in Visalia, CA. Bring your friends and family to follow step-by-step instruction to recreate a featured painting. It's STRESS-FREE and absolutely NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY! A Brush, A Beverage, A Blast!

February 13: TCFB Calendar Art Contest Deadline
The theme for the Tulare County Farm Bureau Calendar Art Contest (for students in grades K-12) is "Tulare County Agriculture, First in Food and Fiber," celebrating Tulare County's ranking as the largest ag-producing county in the nation. Details of the competition, including the Feb. 13 deadline, are posted on the Bulletin Board section of www.tulcofb.org.

February 13: Broadway on Main Street, 8-10pm
Hands in the Community will host Betsy Wolfe starring in "Broadway on Main Street" at the Visalia Fox. Tickets, $25-$40 available at foxvisalia.org.

February 13: Patrick Contreras Band, 9:30pm
Playing with influences of Hip Hop, Mariachi, Rock, Soul, Jazz, Electronic and Classical to become one of violin's rising stars, Patrick Contreras brings the violin to a new level at a 21+ show at the Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St. in Visalia. This intimate Cellar Door show is the perfect pre-Valentine night out. Tickets are $8

February 14: Jack's Cafe Grand Opening,

9am-6pm
Formerly Java Island, Jack's Cafe will hold its Grand Opening on Valentine's Day. There will be coffee tasting, a petting zoo, pony rides, a bounce house, music, prize drawings, and a few local community booths. Valentine gifts and roses will be for sale. Jack's Cafe is located at 500 South Kaweah, Avenue in Exeter.

February 14: Wine and Chocolate with Juni Fisher, 6:30pm
Come to the Lindsay Theater and enjoy Wine and Chocolate with Juni Fisher on Valentine's Day. Award-winning Western Singer/Songwriter Juni Fisher will perform all of her hit tunes starting at 7:30pm, with a special Wine and Chocolate Pre-show party starting at 6:30pm. Tickets for the concert only are $20. Tickets for the concert and Pre-show party are $30. Take your favorite Valentine to the Lindsay Community Theater on for an evening of Wine, Chocolate, and romance with Juni Fisher.

February 14: Avett Brothers in Concert, 8pm
The Avett Brothers will perform at the Visalia Fox Theatre on Valentine's Day. Tickets available by calling 625-1369.

February 14: Prom Throw Back 2015
Kings United Way is offering a "do-over" for your prom. Attendees are encouraged to represent their decade in attire. Tickets are $50 or $100 and include dinner and wine. Proceeds go to benefit the United Way. For information, call 584-1536. Admission is free to the Tulare Historical Museum, 444 W. Tulare Ave. For information, visit tularehistoricalmuseum.org.

February 14: Annual Rawhide Job Fair, 9am-noon
The Rawhide will hold their annual job fair at Rawhide Ballpark (300 N. Giddings Street in Visalia) on Saturday, February 14. Positions are available in a variety of areas, including concessions, food preparation, retail, and ushering.

February 15: Tulare Historical Museum Free Admission, 12:30-4pm
Admission is free to the Tulare Historical Museum, 444 W. Tulare Ave. For information, visit tularehistoricalmuseum.org.

February 15: Jason Eady, 8pm
Singer-Songwriter Jason Eady performs at the Front Porch House, 17612 Lacey Blvd., Lemoore. Tickets are $15.

February 17: SVA Informational Meeting, 6-7pm
Sycamore Valley Academy is accepting applications, and a meeting will be held in the SVA cafeteria for those curious about the school. Spanish translation provided.

February 18 to 21: Grease
Mt. Whitney High School will perform the classic musical. For information, visit www.vusd.org

February 19: Meet the Docs, 5-7pm
Meet the cardiac surgeons of Golden State Cardiac & Thoracic Surgery Group who perform cardiac surgery at Kaweah Delta Medical Center. 202 W. Willow (4th floor) in Visalia.

February 19: Social Media Marketing Jump Start, 9-11am
Over 87% of small businesses are now using social media to connect with their customers. How about you? The challenge of course -- is managing your time and measuring real results. This workshop is the "what, why, and how" of social media campaigns, and will be given at the Visalia Chamber of Commerce 220 N. Santa Fe St.

February 19: Ribbon Cutting, 4-5pm
Ribbon Cutting for the SPCA New Spray and Neuter Clinic at 9405 W. Goshen in Visalia. February is National Spray and Neuter your pet month.

February 19: Orientation for Prospective Foster Parents, 6:30pm
Tulare County Foster Care Licensing will hold an orientation for prospective foster parents at 6:30pm on Thursday, Feb. 19, at its 26500 S. Mooney Blvd. office. People who are interested in becoming foster parents will need to attend an orientation meeting, and meet requirements such as being at least 18 years old, being financially able to support their own family, having no criminal record and a clear health screening and being certified in CPR and first aid. To schedule a personal orientation, or for other information, call (559) 623-0581.

February 20: Free Drive-Thru Shredding Day
A free shredding service for seniors will be held at Quail Park Retirement Village, 4520 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia. Confidential documents and electronic waste (TVs, computers and printers) will be accepted. For information, call 624-3503.

February 20: Palette Club Meeting, 7pm
Tulare Historical Museum Heritage Art Gallery hosts the Palette Club at 444 W. Tulare Ave. For information, visit tularehistoricalmuseum.org.

February 21: A Night of Wine Cheese & Chocolate, 6:30pm
The Tulare Historical Museum will host an elegant, romantic evening set against the backdrop of Museum treasures. Tickets, $30, are available at tularehistoricalmuseum.org.

February 21: Great Movies/Great Music, 7:30pm
Tulare County Symphony Orchestra's film series continues with music from spy films from James Bond to Mission Impossible. The concert will be held at the Visalia Fox Theatre. For information, visit tularecountysymphony.com.

February 22: Mariachi Gala, 5-10:30pm
The Hanford Chamber of Commerce is proud to present the Mariachi Gala on February 22 at the Hanford Civic Center Auditorium. Tickets are priced at $100 per person. Ticket price includes show and Sit-Down Dinner catered by Que Pasa Mexican Restaurant. There will be Complementary Wine from 5-6p.m. as well as a Tequila Bar & No Host Bar to purchase from. This event will be Featuring Mariachi Aquila, Mariachi Maxicanisimo, Mariachi De La Tierra, Mariachi Yolanda Yolanda, Trio Los Romances and Ballet Folklorico Dancers. Tickets will be available to purchase on January 19th at the Hanford Chamber of Commerce. For more information or to sponsor this event please contact 559-582-0483 or email hanfordchamber@comcast.net.

February 23: Great Conversations--"Of Friendship" and "Of Solitude", 4-5:30pm
A discussion of these Great Works by Montaigne will take place on the COS main campus in Hospital Rock 133.

February 24: 6th Annual Empty Bowls, 5:30-7:30pm
Empty Bowls is an international project to fight hunger, personalized on a community level. Choose a handcrafted bowl for your soup, catered by The Vintage Press, and take it home as a reminder of all the empty bowls in the world. Walk through the Visalia Rescue Mission's kitchen line to experience what hundreds in our community do on a daily basis. Peruse silent auction items and enjoy live music during dinner.

February 24: Exeter Library Book Drive, 11am-5pm
Friends of the Library - Exeter is having their first Book Drive on Tuesday, February 24, 2015. All donations can be dropped off at the Exeter Library between 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. We're focusing on children's books this first time, because we can't keep enough on our shelf for all the kids who visit the library. All other book formats and genres are also welcome.

February 24: Business After Hours, 5:30-7:30pm
Hosted by Kaweah Delta Healthcare District at 820 S. Akers in Visalia, this will be a joint mixer with the Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber.

February 25: World Series Trophy Tour, 4-6pm
The 2010, 2012 and 2014 Major League Baseball's Commissioner's Trophies, crafted by Tiffany & Co., will be on display at Porterville College, 100 East College Avenue, Porterville, to help celebrate the World Series Champions with devoted Giants fans in Junior Giants communities throughout northern and central California, Oregon and Nevada, and help raise funds and awareness for the Junior Giants program.

February 27: "Bold & Beautiful" 10am-3pm
The Creative Center's Jon Ginsburg Gallery is showing "Bold & Beautiful," art by Brenda Allison of Fresno, in January and February. Brenda's work is recognized for her exceptional use of color and depth with unique layering of materials. The show is open Monday-Friday, 10-3, at 606 N. Bridge, Visalia. 559 733-9329.

February 28: Varied Impressions, 10am-4pm
"Tulare County Varied Impressions" features many local artists' paintings, drawings and photos at the Tulare Historical Museum, 444 W. Tulare in Tulare. Open Thursday-Saturday 10-4. 559 686-2074 or www.tularehistoricalmuseum.org

MARCH

March 5: 4th Annual Teacher Job Fair, Noon--4pm
Due to the severe shortage of teachers we have in the valley, Brandman University is putting on the fair at the Hanford Campus of Brandman University, 325 Mall Drive Hanford. For more information please contact Shelsy Hutchison at 559-587-3446 or shutchis@brandman.edu

March 5: Student Art Show Opens, 4-6pm
Tulare Historical Museum will open its annual Student Art Show with a reception for the students and their families at the Heritage Art Gallery, 444 W. Tulare Ave. The show will run through April 4. For information, visit tularehistoricalmuseum.org.

March 6-7: 10th Annual Father Daughter Dance, 6-9pm
Visalia Parks and Recreation have named the theme for this year's Father Daughter Dance as "The Rockin' 50s" and it is a sock hop for girls ages 4-16. Live music, finger foods and complimentary photograph. Cost is $50 per couple, $25 per additional guest. The event will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. For information, visit liveandplayvisalia.com.

March 7 & 8: Tulare Sci-Fi Con
A pop-culture convention that welcomes all genres will be held at the International Agri-Center to benefit the Tulare Library Children's Section. Vendors, artists fan groups and others can download exhibitor applications at tularescificon.org. For information, visit facebook.com/tularescificon.

March 7: Selma Swap Meet, 6am-3pm
The 9th annual Selma Swap, known as a "big boy toy" swap meet, will be held at the Selma Flea Market at Highway 99 and Mountain View Avenue. The event features cars, boats, go-carts, new and antique car parts, motorcycle parts and more, along with food booths and a variety of collectibles. Parking is free; admission is $5 per person. Children 12 and under are admitted free of charge when accompanied by an adult. For directions and details, visit selmaswap.com or call 896-3243

March 7: Porterville College Athletic Hall of Fame, 5:30pm
Dr. Horace Mitchell, president of CSU Bakersfield, will be the featured speaker at the Porterville College Athletic Hall of Fame Dinner. Tickets are $50, $275 for a table of six or $350 for a table of eight. For information, call 791-2319.

March 7: Dinner, Dance & Silent Auction, 5:30-11pm
Sponsored by the Central Valley Vietnam Veterans, dine and dance the night away at the Visalia Veteran's Memorial Building. No-host cocktails can be enjoyed from 5:50-6:30, followed by dinner at 7:00. Between 8 and 11, dance to the sounds of Soul Patrol. Tickets are $35/person or $280/table. For more information or tickets, call 559-684-0552.

March 7: Eroica, 7:30pm
Old and new meet in this Tulare County Symphony Orchestra concert with Beethoven's "Eroica" combined with today's hottest living composers like Tan Dan's "You Tube Symphony." The concert will be held at the Visalia Fox Theatre. For information, visit tularecountysymphony.com.

March 9: Great Conversations--TBA, 4-5:30pm
A discussion TBA will take place on the COS main campus in Hospital Rock 133.

March 13 & 14: World of Outlaws STP Sprint Car Series
World of Outlaws STP Sprint Car Series, King of the West 410 Sprint Car Series and USAC West Coast 360 Sprint Cars will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

March 14: Dave Stamey, 7pm
Mavericks Coffee House will celebrate its 12th anniversary with a concert featuring Dave Stamey. Tickets are $30. For information, visit mavericksccoffeehouse.com.

March 16: An Irish Hooley, 6:30pm
Seven musicians of Slugger O'Toole and step dances from the Kerry Dance Troupe will perform at the Visalia Fox Theater. Tickets, $19-$35, are available at foxvisalia.org.

March 20: 7th Annual Visalia Chamber Leadership Golf Tournament, 10:30am
Registration begins at 10:30am at the Valley Oaks Golf Course, with a 12:01pm Shotgun Start of 4-person scrambles. Practice balls, cart & green fees included, and lunch is provided. 20% off at Pro Shop on golf day only. Raffle tickets $1 each or 6 for $5.00; Mulligan $5 each--limit 2; Bump-up $5 each--per player, entire team must participate.1st Place, $500; 2nd Place, $200; 3rd Place, $100.

March 20: 26th Annual Friday Night Live Lip Sync Contest, 6-9pm
The Tulare County Office of Education sponsors a lip sync contest broken down into four categories: lip sync, dance, showcase and novelty. For more information visit Gene at genem@tcoe.org

Sports

Looking For A Return To the Big Show

Stefan Barros

The College of the Sequoias baseball team is about ready to begin the 2015 season. This year, the Giants hope to match the success they enjoyed last season. In 2014, COS went to the State Championship tournament in Fresno, finishing third.

Head Coach Jody Allen, who is entering his 22nd season at the helm for the Giants, believes that if this team plays hard every day it can equal the accomplishments of the 2014 team.

"It's difficult to tell if this team can pick up where last year's left off, but if we play hard and control what we can control, then we can be as good as last year," he said.

Last year's team was one of Allen's best teams, he said, "because of where we finished. It was kind of an unexpected run that came out of nowhere, and like any good run in the playoffs, you have to get a few breaks."

According to Allen, there are two players on his team who already have defined leadership roles this season, catcher Dillon Kelley, and pitcher/infielder Blake Edmondson. The skipper says he's never had two players of their caliber return to a team.

"They were both All-Americans last season, and I named both of them as captains. They for sure will have leadership of this ball club," he said.

As far as Kelley, a Mt. Whitney graduate, is concerned, he wants all of the older players on the team to be leaders, not just the two captains.

"We want every sophomore on the team to be a leader for the freshmen," he said.

Kelley did acknowledge the fact that these particular freshmen are very coachable and easy to teach.

Edmonson, an El Diamante graduate, knew that last year's team was good and was not surprised by the run they made in the playoffs.

"We knew we had a good team last year," he said, "but we had to overcome some obstacles. This year we have a chance to be as good and have the same outcome."

College of the Sequoias' 2015 baseball team. Photo by Stefan Barros.

While Allen sees a lot of promise in his incoming freshman class, he does admit that it is tough to evaluate them without seeing them in game situations.

"We have athletically talented freshmen on this team," he continued. "But since they're freshmen, they have to be able to build chemistry with the returning guys. They also have other things to

BASEBALL continued on **28 »**

Sequoia Cycling Classic Returns to Visalia

Nancy Vigran

Cycling enthusiasts once again have something to look forward to, locally, as the Sequoia Cycling Classic returns to Visalia this spring for the first time in several years.

For a couple of decades--between 1987 and 2009--spring cycling races were something to look forward in Visalia and Exeter. But when the Tour of California diverted its route to include the Central Valley, volunteers and resources were spent on it, and the local cycling event suffered. The past few years, the Tour has returned to the coast and local cyclists have worked diligently to revive local activities.

"It will be more than a race," said Eric Henson, co-director of the event. "It's going to be a community event."

Henson said he hopes to attract 300-500 riders and 15,000 spectators on Sunday, April 26.

"Once something is gone for a while, it is hard to get it back," He said.

Henson and co-director, Shaun Bagley, started working to bring the Sequoia Cycling Classic back in 2013. They had to find a date that fit into the California schedule, then get permits and agreements made for the Visalia Criterium, sanctioned by the U.S. Cycling Federation and U.S.A. Cycling.

Then there was the hope of sponsorship, but once the word got out about the comeback sponsorships were coming in before even being asked for, Henson said.

There will be about 10 hours of racing, Henson said, which includes 10 races plus two races for youngsters.

"It will be more of a regional race than a national one, for the first year," Henson said.

He hopes to draw the attention of West Coast teams. Cycling is a team sport, not just an individual one. Attracting a prominent member of a team will probably influence that team to come**.** There is competition on that date, but it is mostly across country in Atlanta and Arkansas.

There are five categories for non-pro racing, with Category V being the beginning. Once one participates in a given amount of races, he is moved up to Category IV, where the competion really begins and points are gathered. Henson is currently Category III; Bagley is Category II.

There will be a large focus this year on women's racing with equal purse-size for the ladies as for the men. This is something not often seen in cycle racing, and will hopefully be appreciated, Henson said.

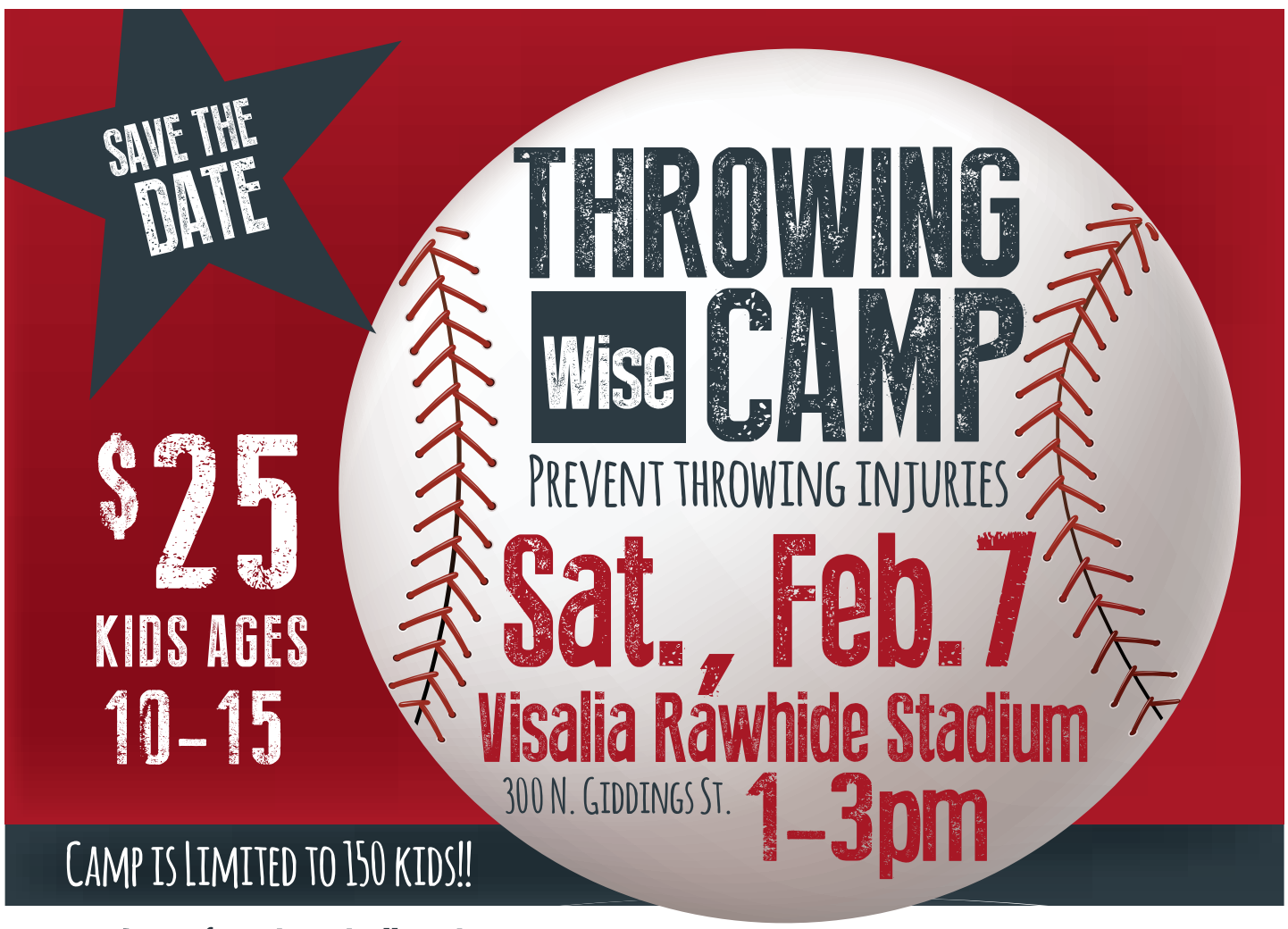
Bagley concurs, stating there has been a large upswing in women's racing in the past few years.

"Historically women have received less winnings then do the men; traditionally, half," Bagley said. "But they put just as much training into it as the men do."

There are about 30 to 40 women from the Visalia-Fresno-Clovis area who currently compete in racing, he said.

Both Bagley and Henson are avid racers with full lives, and yet they want to spend extra time bringing back the Sequoia Cycling Classic and making it a success.

CYCLING continued on **28 »**



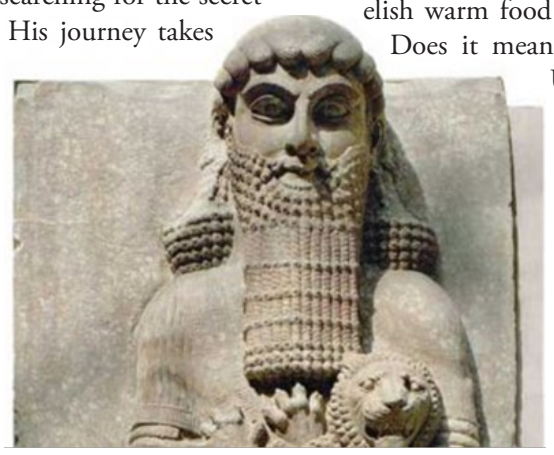
Great Conversations

The Epic of Gilgamesh

Joseph R. Teller

This week the Great Conversations group discussed the ancient Mesopotamian text *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* the oldest known literary work of any civilization—predating the Bible and the Homeric epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey. Gilgamesh* was discovered in the mid-nineteenth century in Nineveh, inscribed on clay tablets that date to the seventh century B.C., but the story itself is at least two thousand years older.

The first part of the narrative relates the exploits of Gilgamesh, a demi-god king of Uruk, and his friend Enkidu, a man created by the gods "in the image of Gilgamesh." The two go on adventures together, conquering supernatural beasts and earning fame for their prowess. But when Enkidu dies, struck down by a decree of the god Anu, Gilgamesh faces the most frightening challenge of all: the mystery of death. Haunted by his friend's death, Gilgamesh spends the rest of the epic searching for the secret of immortality. His journey takes him to Utnapishtim, a man who was given eternal life after saving his family from the great flood sent by the god Enlil in ages past. Moved by Gilgamesh's love for Enkidu, Utnapishtim gives Gilgamesh a plant that grants immortality when eaten. But in a tragedy that is at once inevitable and familiar, the plant is snatched away by a snake, leaving Gilgamesh to return to Uruk chastened, and perhaps wiser.



Despite the fragmentary quality of the narrative (some of the clay tablets have been lost), our group thought that the epic is ultimately about Gilgamesh's development as a human being. One question we discussed was, "to what extent does Gilgamesh change over the course of his adventures?" Some argued that Gilgamesh changes very little by the end; others claimed that Gilgamesh grows from a wild, beast-like man in the beginning into a more thoughtful and even philosophical character, one who learns the futility of searching for immortality and who recognizes that nothing in life is permanent, not even the love of friendship. Some were fascinated by the text's thematic tensions between nature and civilization, while others in the group enjoyed the work's stark poetic beauty, especially in passages where Gilgamesh laments Enkidu—passages that ring true for anyone who has endured the loss of a loved one: "The leaves of the trees and the paths you loved / in the forest grow dark. / Night itself murmurs and so too does the day. / All the eyes of the city that once saw your kind face begin to weep. / Why? Because you were my brother, and you died…Enkidu can move no more. / Enkidu can lift his head no more." In another line of questioning, the group discussed what life ultimately means for Gilgamesh once he is confronted with his own mortality. Does it mean, as one character claims, that we should "sing and dance" and "[r]elish warm food and cool drinks"? Does it mean, in the words of Utnapishtim, that we ought "to live and love," "to rise above and give back / what you yourself were given"?

In discussing this most ancient of stories, one can't help but realize that Gilgamesh poses questions as pertinent today as they were four thousand years ago: What does it mean to be civilized? How does friendship change us? What is wisdom? Is anything in this life permanent? How are we to face death—the death of others, as well as our own?

If you are interested in joining the Great Conversations discussion group at COS, please email Dr. Joseph Teller at josepht@cos.edu

The New Year of the Trees

Congregation Beit Shalom

Tu B'Shevat (literally meaning the 15th of Shevat) celebrates the yearly cycle of nature, the appearance of fruit on trees, which in Israel happens during the mid-winter. The earliest blooming trees there, almonds, mark the beginning of what is selected for tithing (the practice of donating 10 percent of goods or currency) in the new fruit bearing cycle.

The connection to the earth, its animals, fruit trees and edible plants were then, and continue to be, tithed according to the commandments in the Hebrew Bible. The Tu B'Shevat seder, a ritual involving the eating of specific fruit, drinking wine or grape juice and studying selections from the sacred literature of Judaism was practiced by the sixteenth-century Kabbalists (Jewish mystics) of Safed in Israel. During this ritual meal, there customarily was the tasting of specific fruits, nuts, and grains that are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as being from the land of milk and honey, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. On this day, traditionally, trees are planted.

Almond Blossom, Vincent Van Gogh

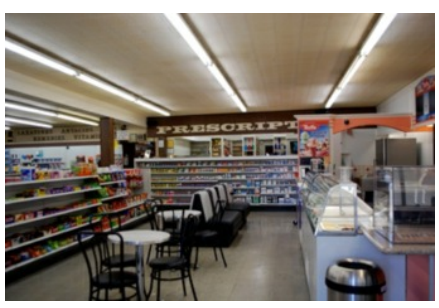
The Kabbalists teach that nature can reveal all of God's mysteries, if properly studied, and that God dwells in a perfect realm called Atzilut, the world of pure spirit. There are three other realms: Bri'ah, the world of Creation/the Mind; Yetzirah, the world of Formation/the Emotions, and Assiyah, the world of Making/the Physical. The last world, Assiyah, is the material world in which human beings live, and it is the only world which we can perceive with our five ordinary senses.

Kabbalists also teach that humans have enormous power to influence the universe. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve broke God's law by eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Before that, there was one unified, collective soul in the universe. All of Creation was united with its Creator through that soul; when the first divine law was broken, so was that soul. It was shattered.

Since human actions have the power to explode the collective soul, through spiritual work humans have the capability to restore it through performing mitzvoth (commandments). The mitzvah that is emphasized on Tu B'Shevat is saying blessings over the food that we eat. The Kabbalists teach that sparks from the fragmented collective soul fell into all living things, and that we humans can return the "holy sparks" stored in plants by reciting blessings over the fruits and vegetables before eating them. Blessings have even more restorative power when they are said with kavannah, or intention/meaning.

The Tu B'Shevat seder is built around this mitzvah: we eat many different fruits as an opportunity to say many blessings, and we meditate on the fruit so as to send much kavannah with each blessing. The seder is considered a "wondrous tikkun," an act of restoration that humans can do to "fix" the damaged universe.

IVANHOE Pharmacy



(559) 798-1219

33060 Road 159, Ivanhoe

Complete line of comfortable shoes for diabetics (men and women).

We deliver prescriptions throughout northeastern Tulare County from Woodlake to Dinuba.

We can help you with your Medicare questions, too!

Fast and friendly service - the old fashion way!

Tulare Community Health Clinic

"Celebrate life through health community and family"

"Celebrar la vida con salud, comunidad y familia"

Like us on facebook.

(559) 686-9097 WWW.TCHCI.COM

Health

Kaweah Delta Hosts Grand Opening of Sequoia Medical Center

Staff Reports

On January 29, Kaweah Delta Health Care District hosted a grand opening on its West Visalia campus for the new, 52,000-square-foot Sequoia Medical Center. The building, developed by State Center Properties, was designed by project architect Anthony Pings and Associates.

During the grand opening, community members had a chance to tour the center at 820 S. Akers Street; furthermore, attendees met physicians, therapists and staff from the businesses housed inside the building, which include:

Sequoia Prompt Care, Suite 100

This is Sequoia Prompt Care's second location in Visalia. Sequoia Prompt Care, a division of Kaweah Delta Health Care District, provides care for general illnesses and offers everything from physicals to workers' compensation care. It allows patients to skip the waiting room with Quick Pass. Patients can register for QuickPass at the second site by calling 624-6800, then wait at home or at the office until an exam room is ready. Both sites are open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends. Walk-in patients are welcome. Cash and most insurance is accepted. Information: www.sequoiapromptcare.org or (559) 624-6800.

South Valley Vascular Associates, Suite 120

South Valley Vascular Associates specializes in disease of the arteries and veins including peripheral arterialdisease, varicose veins, carotid artery disease, abdominal aortic aneurysm and hemodialysis. Its experienced physicians include: Drs. Omar Araim, Matthew Campbell, and LaMar Mack, along with Physician Assistant Philip Myers. Information: www.svvascular.com or (559) 624-4118.

Therapy Specialists, Suite 200

Therapy Specialists, a division of Kaweah Delta Health Care District, is now the largest physical therapy studio in Tulare County at 10,000 square feet – three times the size of its previous location. Therapy Specialists offers physical therapy for orthopedics, hand, and sports medicine for spine, shoulders, arms, hips and knees. The new location includes a therapy gym with a rubber track, fitness and cardio strength training equipment, a hand center, private treatment rooms, a locker room and a Pilates physical therapy clinic with equipment unlike any other in the area. Information: (559)624-3427.

Hanger Clinic, Suite 230

Hanger Clinic specializes in orthotic and prosthetic services and products. Specializing in the provision of orthotic and prosthetic solutions, Hanger teams deliver clinical systems, technology and customer service to more than one million plus patients each year at over 740-plus clinic locations nationwide. Information: www.hangerclinic.com or (559) 732-3957

Measles are Getting Close to Home

Staff Reports

On January 28, the County of Fresno Department of Public Health announced confirmation of the measles in a man visiting the county. To date, there have been no confirmed cases in Tulare or Kings Counties.

Measles have become a concern since cases for several individuals stemmed from a visit to Disneyland in Southern California, just before Christmas. Since then cases have been confirmed in many Western states and Mexico, with a rise in confirmed cases within California to 91, according to the California Department of Public Health.

The outbreak is alarming as measles had been considered by most a disease of the past. But being airborne, it is highly communicable among those who have not been vaccinated.

"It is an alarming situation because of how quickly it can spread," said Lucy Thompson, a nurse practioner with the Kings County Department of Public Health.

It can be treated with rest, fluids and methods of reducing fever, she said. But for those with other underlying conditions such as diabetes or respiratory problems it becomes more of a problem.

Symptoms of the measles include a fever, which may continue to rise, runny nose, red and irritated eyes, and a rash. The rash generally begins along the hairline and into the face before moving on to the chest and torso. It appears as small, pin-size red bumps. Until the rash appears, the symptoms could resemble those of others illnesses, including the flu. Anyone with symptoms should stay home and contact their doctor, officials say.

Vaccination is the key to combating the disease. The current vaccine recommendation is for children one year of age to have two doses of the vaccine, one month apart, said Dr. Karen Haught, Tulare County Health Officer.

Children who have not been vaccinated should be, Haught said.

Luckily most adults have either been vaccinated or, if born before 1957, were exposed to or had the illness and developed immunity. It is easy to test for, through a blood test, in case one is not sure about their history as a child. The test will reveal if the individual has enough immunity against the disease or needs a booster. All healthcare workers should have the test done to assure their immunity.

Generally, there are no side effects to the vaccination. Some 5-15% of recipients may experience a slight fever, and five percent may develop a slight rash, according to the Immunization Action Coalition (IAC).

The incubation period for measles is 7-21 days, with symptoms generally starting within 10-12 days of exposure, according to the IAC. Those who may have been exposed to measles should stay home. Vaccination may still help and can reduce the symptoms of the disease.

"It is an unpleasant illness and sometimes can cause more serious complications, such as pneumonia or encephalitis," Haught said. "Complications are more of a risk for those under five, people who are malnourished, or who have an immune deficiency."

"Measles was declared eliminated (i.e., interruption of year-round endemic transmission) in the United States in 2000, because of high population immunity achieved by high 2-dose measles vaccine coverage and a highly effective measles vaccine," according to the Center for Disease Control, Haught noted.

"However, measles is still endemic in many parts of the world, and outbreaks can occur in the U.S. when unvaccinated groups are exposed to imported measles virus," she said. "Disney and other theme parks are international attractions, and visitors come from many parts of the world, including locations where measles is endemic. The current multi-state outbreak underscores the ongoing risk of importation of measles, the need for high measles vaccine coverage, and the importance of a prompt and appropriate public health response to measles cases and outbreaks."

KAWEAH DELTA WELLNESS & YOU PRESENTS:

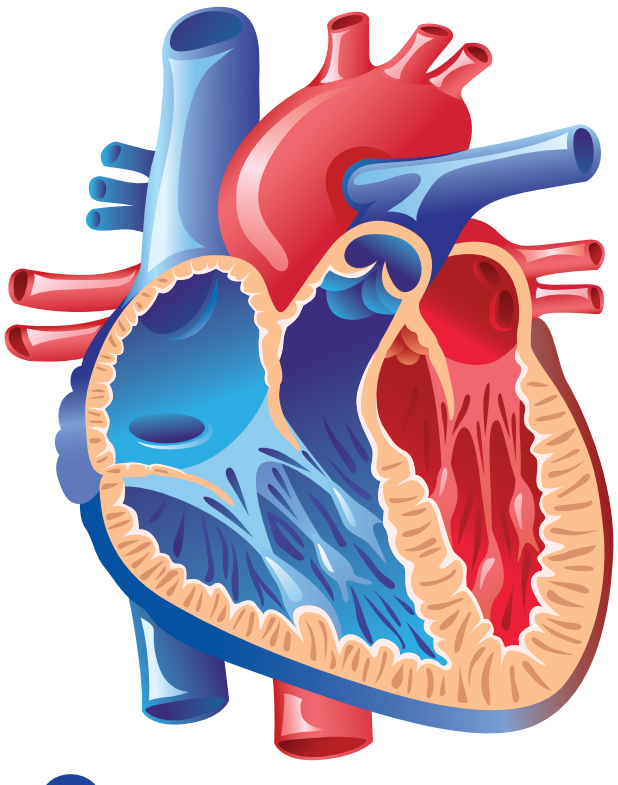
HEART VALVE DISEASE

Learn about symptoms, diagnosis, and treatments.

Wednesday, Feb. 11
5:30-6:30 PM

MultiService Center
402 W. Acequia Ave

Speakers:
Philip Faraci, MD
Leheb Araim, MD
Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgeons



FREE
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Kaweah Delta
HEALTH CARE DISTRICT

Agriculture

Ag Expo, World's Largest, Continues to Draw Local Farmers

Nancy Vigran

For 47 years, the local agricultural community has looked forward to having what has become the largest informational ag expo in the world. This year is no different, with perhaps the largest World Ag Expo to date, to be held in Tulare, February 11-13.

Growers, processors, exporters, importers, financers and those who are just plain interested, gather for three days during the second week of February, to learn and tryout new or upgraded products, and, to network.

"It promotes a tremendous amount of networking opportunities and the best management strategies," said Tricia Stever Blattler, executive director of the Tulare County Farm Bureau.

"It gives the local farm community a chance to get out and drive the newest equipment," she added, "and hear from speakers we may not be able to attract at other times of the year."

Organizer and International Agri Center Executive Director Jerry Sinift concurs.

"Whether you're local or global, there are many, many companies introducing their new products at the show," he said.

And even though there are approximately 375 varieties of crops and products, grown and made in the local area, there is a lot of information for everyone.

"It takes a good two days, if not all three, to see the show," Sinift said. "With different seminars daily, there still needs to be time to visit exhibitors."

One particular seminar of interest to most everyone locally, is the Water Forum set for Thursday, February 13 from 12:30 to 3pm. The seminar, hosted by KMPH newscaster Rich Rodriguez, will include a panel of expert state and federal water representatives lead by Mario Santoyo, Executive Director of the California Latino Water Coalition, to address local city officials and farmers on what is anticipated to be the worst drought in the state in decades.

A second moderated panel of high level policy and technical representatives from the state and federal governments as well as key water agencies and local dignitaries, will discuss and answer questions lead by by Tim Quinn, executive director, Association of California Water Agencies. There will also be time allotted for individual questions from the audience.

The show is sold out as far as exhibitors go, with approximately 1,500, said Fred Foster, International Ag Expo CFO.

The show keeps wanting to grow, but it is full to capacity for now, he said. Some changes have been made with the Home Arts Building accommodating more additional larger vendors this year.

While no official study has been done recently, "about 90% of the attendees are from West of the Rockies," Foster approximated, "and most of those are from California."

There are busloads of farmers from Canada and Mexico, who attend each year with groups from Africa, Australia and a lot of European countries as well.

A new attraction this year is the Farmer's Luncheon, which also takes place on Thursday, February 13 at noon. Keynote speaker AG Kawamura, an Orange County grower and former secretary of the California Department of Agriculture, will speak on the topic of "Food is Privilege, Not a Right."

Kawamura is the co-chair of Solutions From the Land, a founding board member of the Delta Vision, and a trustee of the Southern California Water Committee and the California WateReuse Foundation.

Tickets to the Farmer's Lunch are $35 each and $280 for a reserved table for eight. The lunch will be held in the VIP Event Tent on the Expo grounds.

Tickets can be purchased on the World Ag Expo website at www.worldagexpo.org/FarmersLunch.

World Ag Expo general admission tickets are $15. More information regarding World Ag Expo can be found at www.worldagexpo.org.

The World Ag Expo is for the young and old. Photo courtesy International Agri-Center.

'Apps for Ag' Hackathon at West Hills

"Apps for Ag"--a unique competitive hackathon partnering young farmers and mobile application developers to creatxe free, open-source apps for growers--will be held by the California AgTech Roundtable between February 20 and 22 at the West Hills College Coalinga (WHCC) Farm of the Future, according to the organization's organizing committee.

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Chief Information Officer Robert Schmidt and a leading online ag tech commentator, as recognized by Twitter, will deliver keynote remarks with the theme: Digital Innovation On the Farm.

"Agricultural technology is ramping up and environmental factors, like the historic drought, are driving the great need for on-farm apps to integrate hardware and software and to communicate from the field," said committee co-chair Patrick Dosier, an agronomist and owner of Trans Valley AgTech, who represents the California Association of Pest Control Advisors. Clint Cowden, interim director of the WHCC Farm of the Future, Robert Tse from the USDA, and Robert Gore from The Gualco Group, Inc. in Sacramento, complete the committee.

Here's the itinerary for the three-day event:

- Members of the Young Farmers & Ranchers of the California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF) begin by informing the 100 invited developers of their business needs for mobile and related apps
- Coder teams then spend the next two days creating the apps
- Judges render their verdicts Sunday

Participants may register at the official Apps for Ag website. Additional sponsors are welcome, too. Link: http://www.apps-for-ag.com

"There is an ag tech revolution starting in 2015, and this is a first step," Dosier said.

ATI
Serving Farmers Since 1975
ATI MACHINERY
AG EQUIPMENT RENTAL
• Challenger MT865 – MT855 – MT845 – MT835 – MT765
• John Deere 9620T – 9520T – 8430T – 8520T – 8400T
• John Deere MFWD Wheel Tractors – 275HP to 150HP
• Cat Challenger 95-85-75 Rubber Belted Tractors
• Case MX285 – MXM 175 Wheel Tractors
• Cat D8K Direct Drive Mounted and Drawbar Tractors
• Cat D6C – 3 & 5 Shank Rippers - Discs
Call: 1-888-461-0625 www.atimachinery.com

PACIFIC DISTRIBUTING, INC
Distributor for Orchard-Rite® wind machines for frost protection & Tropic Breeze® original parts
Sales
Service
New
Used
Portable
Stationary
24 Hour Emergency Service
559-564-3114
Woodlake, CA
www.orchard-rite.com
Randy Quenzer, Sales
559-805-8254
randyquenzer@pdi-wind.com
Jeff Thorning, Sales
559-972-9937
jeffthorning@pdi-wind.com
Chad Hymel, Sales
559-909-0008
chadhymel@pdi-wind.com

Sprint Car Events to Take Place in Tulare

For the first time in their history, the World of Outlaws Sprint Car Series and the King of the West Series will co-sanction two weekend events this spring. Together the two will sanction races on Friday and Saturday, March 13-14, at Thunderbowl Raceway in Tulare, and the Wine Country Outlaw Showdown on the weekend of April 11-12, at Calistoga Speedway.

"The King of the West Series is the premier regional touring series on the West Coast," said Outlaws' Series Director Carlton Reimers. "To bring together their incredible talent with that of the World of Outlaws Sprint Car Series creates a high level of competition and great event experience for the fans."

The King of the West Series, founded in 1960 as the Northern Auto Racing Club, competes throughout California and the West Coast. It has launched the careers of Paul McMahan and World of Outlaws champion Jason Meyers. The series is also the regular home of 2014 event winners Jonathan Allard and Carson Macedo.

"It's going to be a big year for the King of the West Series, and co-sanctioning the races at Tulare and Calistoga with the World of Outlaws certainly increases the growing competition between the King of the West racers and the Outlaws," said the King of the West Series' John Prentice.

The two events are on two of California's most distinct tracks. Thunderbowl Raceway is a high-banked, 1/3-mile bullring known for producing incredible finishes, while Calistoga is the Golden State's only half-mile dirt track, and its scenic location in the heart of Napa Valley, as well as its long history and tradition, makes it a destination event for any fan.

"This season the World of Outlaws has continued its focus on building weekend destination events into the schedule,"

Tickets for both events are on sale now at http://www.WorldofOutlaws.com/Tickets or by calling 1-877-395-8606.

Downtown Visalia is expecting a full day of cycling races this April. This year's Budweiser Sequoia Cycling Classic is the first in years with events for the whole family. Photo courtesy Sequoia Cycling Classic.

Cycling

Continued from p. 24

"In the Central Valley, there are really no high-end, quality races like we had in Visalia," Bagley said. "My only fear is to get the quantity of racers in."

The central location should help, being equal distance from Southern and Northern California. So should the race's history, as well as the screaming, cheering fans in the downtown locations.

"Most races are held in industrial parks and the only fans are families," Bagley said. "It is just a rush to hear the crowd, while you are in the race."

Both Bagley and Henson will be entered in the race. An outside race manager is hired to manage the event the day of, although the others will be busy too, when they are not racing.

Included in the day will be events for the whole family with a VIP tent, sponsor and information booths and some downtown eateries and business plan to be open.

Baseball

Continued from p. 24

worry about off the field, as well with their class schedules. They are very capable though."

With a mostly new team, Allen does see some weaknesses that his team can work on. As to be expected, inexperience is something to make note of with incoming freshmen.

Specifically, he explained, "On the mound, we have one guy that started a game last year. Also we have some inexperience in the middle of our infield. There will be freshmen starting at both shortstop and second base."

Allen felt similarly about last year's team during the preseason, saying, however, that last year's team had more returner players. But, he does feel better about the players who returned for 2015.

"The sophomores this year have experienced success and it has been an invaluable experience for them," he said.

With the success of the 2014 Giants, awards followed. Allen was selected the ABCA Pacific Division Coach of the year.

"It was definitely an honor because it's as high as an award that a California coach can receive and nobody in the league had ever gotten the award," he said.

While the honor didn't really didn't surprise Allen, he was initially uncertain that he had actually won it.

"I had no idea that this was coming. A letter was sent to the school president that said I had won this award," he added.

But a scheduling conflict wouldn't allow him to be on hand to accept it. Allen already had something scheduled for that day, to be the Father of the Bride.

As he explained, "That was the day of my daughter's wedding and I had to be there to walk her down the aisle. That was more important to me."

Although Allen does have high hopes for his Giants this season, he has yet to discover his team's identity, and, while it is a little bit of a concern to him, he does admit that it is still early.

"An identity has yet to be established, but I'll find out a lot more about these guys once we start playing games," he said.